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FROM A MIDDLESEX GARDEN

THE GARDEN GATE.

FROM A MIDDLESEX GARDEN

A BOOK OF GARDEN THOUGHTS

BY

ALFRED H. HYATT

PREFATORY NOTE

BY

THE HON. MRS. BOYLE (E.V.B.)

With Three Drawings by MARY TOURTEL, & other Illustrations

LONDON

PHILIP WELLBY

6 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE request for a few words by way of introduction to the first chapter in a new "Garden Book" comes at perhaps one of the most barren moments in all the year's twelve months. As the darkest hour is said to be just before the dawn, so the point where Spring and Winter meet may prove the most comfortless of seasons. Frost has disheartened the tender springing that had begun among green things under the earth. Snow has lain with heavy weight on garden borders and flower beds, flattening them into dull unsightliness. Hardly does one care to leave the warm fireside at home, though rooks are calling in the elms, and maybe a broken note or two is heard now and then from some ever-hopeful wild-bird perched on some bare tree.

There seems as yet so little to tempt one to go out!—so little, except perhaps the winter aconites' chill yellow, or snowdrops' frozen loveliness—albeit these may be a large exception. There is now nothing scarcely to inspire; only that one word GARDEN—a word so full of charm, that simply to behold it printed outside a book makes us long immediately to look inside that book.

A long while ago, perhaps, the name of garden, as such, bore slighter meaning. Gardens were more like pleasant shades to spend long Summer days in. People seemed to live in them more than they now do—in England. So at least it would seem, judging by the old prints and oil paint-

ings that remain of garden scenes. Perhaps the Summers were hotter then in those distant days, and fair ladies and courtly gentlemen walked together under the trees, or conversed sitting in temples and arbours (which I think we in these unromantic days less often care to do).

If the modern love for flower-gardens be a fashion of the day, a purer or more innocent fashion could scarcely be imagined. If the sweet old childlike delight of our forefathers and mothers in their groves and fountains and hidden paths and hedged-in lawns be lost now in the rivalry of cultivation of unnumbered species of plants and brilliant bands of "bedding out," it must be forgiven for the sake of the healthful, happy, garden-love which does everywhere prevail.

Everybody loves a garden! Men feel the charm to the full as much as women do, though the latter may have more leisure to enjoy it. And labour or dreaming in a garden, may often suggest to the gardener's mind beautiful and fruitful thoughts. So was it but a short while since, with Miss Close, to whom the nation owed the inspiration of the people's laurel wreaths, for the passing of The Queen's Funeral on the 2nd of February 1901. This lady has elected to be a practical working gardener; and she is a devoted lover of the art. It was when at work in her garden that she willed that the poorest in the land should unite with the richest to honour the passing of the Great Queen through the streets of London. She asked the public for laurel wreaths. Instantly thousands responded to the call. Thousands of green garlands were woven and sent forth, till they reached in double line along the whole route of the splendid procession. And thus it came to pass that the love-tributes of England's poor, even from remotest villages throughout the country, hung side by side

PREFATORY NOTE

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that day with laurels of the great. "Thus noble thought to noble deed is wrought." Doubt it not that many a delightful thought will come to those who work or linger amid the flowers—those fairest of all God's works. It is not without foundation that we have faith in the eternal truth of the words by an old writer, "Who loves a garden still his Eden keeps." And there is nothing that will so long preserve *le cœur en fête* as the indulgence of a pure deep passion for the garden, and for all that is beautiful in Nature.

E. V. B.

HUNTERCOMB MANOR,
March 2, 1901.

This book—notes made during the past three years—claims in no sense of the word to be a practical gardening book, neither does it deal exclusively with the garden's endless charms. Beyond the ordered paths and carefully planned flower-beds, there lies another world—Nature's own garden—and of this realm's many beauties has a record been kept, helped in numerous cases by some forcible quotation from well-known Nature enthusiasts.

A. H. H.

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**"God Almighty first planted a garden, and indeed it is the purest
of all human pleasures."**

—BACON.

JANUARY

The bells have told the birthday of the year,
In notes which speak of lengthening days' return ;
Of warmer hours to hearts that for them yearn,
The bells have told in silvery voices clear.
Come thou, sweet spirit of the vernal Spring,
With visions of fair fields with flowers bedight ;
Ear-haunting melodies that thrill the light,
Filling with joy the heart of everything.
Bring visions of the earth with winter past,
When upward gaze a million flower-eyes,
And silver Spring hastes to the golden arms
Of Summer. Clear Spring-days that change at last
From heaven of empty blue to grey-starred skies,
When eve's hand rocks day's cradle with low psalms !

**"A garden is for its owner's pleasure . . . and adds to human
happiness in one of the purest and best of ways."**

—GERTRUDE Jekyll.

"Retired Leisure, that in trim gardens takes his pleasure."

—MILTON.

PROEM

The slender osier
By the grey stream
Groweth still rosier,
While in a dream
Sleep the silent New-Year days,
By forsaken woodland ways.

Each day a glad thrush sings
More strong and sweet ;
Songs that only Spring's
Listening ears greet.
Singer of the songless ways,
Minstrel of the tuneless days !

UNDER grey branches endless tokens are given that the New Year has commenced. With the dawning of January a new life seems to be diffused into the Garden. One hardly deems it possible when walking under grey boughs, wet with mist, that these same desolate paths will ere long be clothed with Spring's glowing garment of green, on which will be seen the most delicate delineations, and all the world glad with the joy of flowers. The sunlight bestowed at intervals on the passing days search out and show many a promise ; here a thick carpet of emerald cleaver-seedlings, more perfectly formed than any geometrical star, tell of the long trail of threaded whorls of leaves that love to clasp the hawthorn blossoms ; it shows you the glossy leaf-buds of the chestnut (its secret carefully hidden of a perfectly-formed pyramid of flower-buds) that grow more bright and glossy each time the sun shines out on them.

,

FROM A MIDDLESEX GARDEN

The mezereon hastens to tip its stem-sceptres with ruby jewels; its fading is ever the signal for beauty to awake, calling :—

“ Wake again !
O wake again !
Heart of our English land that lies asleep ! ”

And then, with all possible haste,

“ The land renews its strength again
As spreads the spring once more
With coy delayings along the northern shore ;
And, day by day,
Morning rises grave or gay
And sometimes brings as with the dawn,
The Baltic cold with daggers drawn
That sweeps the landscape grey,
And sometimes a fairer scene
Where falls the sun on meadows green
While the south-west leads out the lambs to play.”

These atoms of colour in the grey are more than an omen of promise, and then, besides the few flower-stars of the year's morning, there are songs arising sweetly in the brightening twilight of the year's dawntide !

"As for our love for gardens, it is the last refuge of art in the minds
and souls of many Englishmen."

—SIR ARTHUR HELPS.

JANUARY

Sad and silent light of day,
Dawns upon a world of grey ;
Wind-borne rain to sleeping corn,
Brings a promise of the dawn—
Dawn of Spring, the year's first gladness,
Farewell words to tears of sadness.
Hand on latch of Winter's gate,
Weeping Spring doth watch and wait.

Fair-faced stars crowd high above,
Heralding Spring's time of love,
Their clear beams that earthward shine,
Promises the time divine :—
Dawn of Spring, the new joy reigning,
Overpast all sad complaining ;
Spring comes from the wintry east
To her sunlit, flower-set feast.

THE shortest day of the year has passed, and with hopeful joy we greet the young days of the New Year, although at present and for some time yet to come we may expect that the frost will "grip all things bitterly." The only life of the bare fields are the cawing rooks, for ever flying across the grey sky, passing lazily homewards to the leafless trees. Now and again as we walk along the lanes where still linger the remains of autumn's beauty in the few leaves upon the low bushes, we may hear the shrill notes of a startled black-bird as it flies at our approach from the underhedge where the hoar-frost has drifted in white patches. Flying from tree to tree the chaffinch as it rises and falls in its flight shows strangely the white feathers in its expanded wings, seeming to

twinkle as it goes through the grey woodlands as does a star in the grey sky.

“A Happy New Year!” Each of us wish that it may be a happy one to those around us, and the old kindly greetings are given and returned from the very heart. How much is expressed in that simple wish, and how many of us whisper to ourselves when we have expressed it, “Will the year bring many changes? Will it be a happy one?” For some, no doubt, a great sorrow waits in store; for others, a joy unspeakable! (For me, perhaps, a mingling of each waits, for in a garden-lover’s year there are many joys and sorrows.) And for those whose lot it has been in the past old year to walk in the mists of many disappointments, finding only the dead leaves in life’s garden, may Time lead their feet to a sunlit pleasance, where some of the delayed hopes may be fulfilled and new undreamed-of joys be gathered like perfect roses in a beautiful garden!

.

Sweet are the thoughts which are ours in these the first days of another year,

“Before the crocus lights its golden fires,”

before the snowdrop—“the winter’s latest snowflake”—
thrusts through the earth its spears of tender green!

"Who loves a garden, still his Eden keeps."
—ALCOTT.

JANUARY

These January days give hope anew,
Although the bitter frost and dark hour stays ;
Few flowers the meads' or garths' dead floors bestrew,
These January days.

But in the fields which yet the cold wind greys,
Will open soon a thousand eyes of blue,—
Forget-me-nots, bluebells and speedwell-sprays.

Hope's voice is heard in note of bird, though few
Are woodland songs ; faith in fair days
With snowdrop comes, that lights with its pale hue
These January days.

WE stand upon the threshold of the New Year, and everywhere around Nature seems to be at rest. In a warm corner of the garden, undaunted, a clump of heartsease fills itself with yellow and purple blossoms. Only once as yet has winter arrayed itself in its fantastic white garments, which was a short while since, when the hoar-frost came suddenly (and as quickly vanished), brought by the north wind. So unprepared for it was everything, that on its arrival even the lusty laurels drooped. To-day a wild wind blows, but not from the north, and the river, flowing not far distant from the garden, is lashed into foam ; broken branches are scattered everywhere ; a trail of golden leaves float down the wind-blown opal-tinted stream, and here and there along its banks are collected masses of driftwood. In the meadows fly innumerable crisp leaves, from a distance having the appearance of flocks of tiny birds. And how

full of thoughts and suggestions the heartsease, the drift-wood, and the flocks of leaves are for the dawn of the year.

Now may be studied the many graceful outlines of the naked trees hidden to us at other times of the year, each tree differing in symmetry ; the giant oak whose great arms stretch out perfectly straight around it ; side by side to it the " Lady of the Woods " stands : a striking contrast to the arms of the Forest King are its thread-like falling branches. Yet how more than solitary are those corners of the woodland which we, even in summer, thought the very ideal of solitude, where by the stream the bright-hued kingfisher flew along its course, flashing like a jewel amid the luxuriant growth of the scenery of the moist banks. But even now there is here a certain picturesqueness which in summer must be looked for in vain ; it is the beauty of the winter sunset, when the golden and crimson flame in the western sky is seen from behind the bars of a giant cage, which bars are the tapering trunks of trees.

"My garden of pleasure lies withered and bare."

—MACKENZIE BELL.

JANUARY

Oh, the grey light of the year,
When the Springtime draweth near,
Wakes the world to sunny gleams
From the grey of Winter dreams.

Oh, the shadow of the Spring,
April's light and leaf doth bring,
That is worn by hedges, bowers,
When the world's a smile of flowers.

AS I put my pen to paper regarding the garden, and to chronicle its thoughts, it is the time, midway between Autumn's profusion and Winter's desolation, that very time of which the poet sings—

"Between the dead leaf and the new flower."

And yet the garden is full of the hope of the coming of Spring. To-day it is one of lustrous clearness, which truly betokens Winter's flight. Standing naked as yet, the poplars tremble and sway in the sun-satiate air for very joy; their long tapering twigs seem to run to meet the blue sky above them till lost in its glistening depths. Day by day the land around seems to grow more vigorous; no more it lies in weary stupor, for well it knows the time is near when the first

"Shy buds venture out."

The honeysuckle is fledged all over with little wing-like leaves, and the leaves of the lesser celandine grow more noticeable, pushing their way from under the mossy floor of

the copse. In companionship with this first leaf of the year, the wake-robin is also unfolding, although as yet neither of them are empurpled with spots, one of the chief charms of the wild arum and the celandine. So these two heralds of Spring are the first to deck themselves in green array, even before the sturdy grass begins to recover, and also tell me that much work, too, waits for me in "the garden that I love."

"Men come to build stately sooner than to garden finely."

—BACON.

JANUARY

Ere Winter goes, ere yet the skies
Keep steadfast blue ; ere the last snows
Faint in the sun and frost-flower dies ;
Ere Winter goes,

Come ! there's a magic Nature shows
In naked woods, where wild wind flies
To meet Spring's gentler breath that blows.

The leaf to branch, bids violet eyes
Unclose. A golden flower glows,
Meek celandine of star device,
Ere Winter goes !

TO know the true and many beautiful meanings of Spring, to taste the varied sweets of its delights, to view the many charms it brings with it, it is essential to know the nakedness of woods, the barren and lonely lands that recede from either side of the leafless hedges of the Winter-quiet lane. It is not sufficient to see with admiring, sorrowful eyes the passing away of the Autumn leaves in multitudinous showers, or to watch the leaf-fires flicker and fall on tree and hedge, or when in the year's later hours the last of them are scattered far from their place of birth and home-bough. It is not enough to watch the first grey rains of Winter, or to pass through one white sweeping mist coming suddenly from its hiding-place to linger about the river in dismal solemnity. All this is beautiful enough ; but the simple passing away of the leaves, the first white mists about the naked, shadowless branches are not sufficient to

warrant full enjoyment of the coming Spring. We must first learn to know the long weeks of the empty land of Winter, and watch the threads of many a silver rain interlacing the trees. Every vestige of Autumn's spoil must be buried to give its life back as nourishment to the root that gave it its beauty, and who knows but what each one will find resurrection in a new leaf? The herald star of Spring will soon be seen in the yellow celandine, and a joy unspeakable is born, when from its lowly cradle it sends forth its rays of light which fail not to reach our hearts !

"The wintry garden lies unchanged."

—EMERSON.

JANUARY

When the time was Summer weather,
Oh, the golden, glorious days,
Not a cloud to mar the splendour,
Glistening miles of golden haze.
Emerald corn that grew to golden,
Poppy and with cornflower set,—
Flowers that shone as fairest jewels
In sweet Summer's coronet.

Oh, the waking silver dawning,
Voice of birds in dew-wet trees,
And the scent of op'ning roses,
Everywhere upon the breeze.
Opening then my morning casement,
What a flood of happiness
Came with scents and sounds of Summer,
Each new day to praise and bless.

Hollyhocks beside the pathway ;
Lilies rayed in purest light ;
Pansies frecked with deepest colours ;
Candytuft of fragrant white.
Everywhere the flower of flowers,
Trailing over gate and pale,
Blossoms of love, the happy roses,
Whisp'ring to me Summer's tale !

AS soon as the first ray of light glimmers in the grey eastern sky, the ploughman wends his way to the stubbly fields. One may hear the pleasant jingle of the harness as his team of horses pass down the quiet road in the early dawn-light. How pleasant is the smell of the newly-turned earth of the land which has lain fallow through-

out the winter. To and fro across the face of the field the ploughman guides his plough; patiently his well-groomed team tread beside the newly-made furrow. When the end of each new furrow is reached, how springlike comes the sound of the ploughman's voice as he turns his horses. As I gaze upon this scene in the warm January dawn, I count the long even furrows on the face of the fields, and in doing so I see transfigured before me the picture of our life; the furrows are the years which have been ours, upturned by the plough of time, and I wonder if these furrows of the years of all of us have been ploughed aright, if they were quite ready for the reception of the seed, and if, when the whole acres of life have been ploughed and the seed all sown, what will be our harvest store? Someone has somewhere said, touching upon this human seed-sowing: "Good intentions are at least the seed of good actions; and every man ought to sow them, and leave it to the soil and the seasons whether they come up or not, and whether he or any other gathers the fruit."

In these past warm days, with their foretaste of spring, how the birds have sung! Never do I remember hearing them sing with such sweet melody so early in the year. What a sweetness lingers around the open flowers which in many gardens I notice have been wooed to show their fair faces so early: the wallflowers, too, are making little splashes of colour in the beds and beside the paths. How beautiful the dawn-sky is at morn, when the night-clouds are parting and every rift seems edged with a fringe of blended silver and rose and gold.

Who is that solitary figure who stands on the river's bank? He is the angler, to be sure: he stands contented

enough amid the solitude, with his pipe for sole companion ; he has thrown his line across the still water to seek for silver treasure in its grey depths. The one who would go forth in these early days of the year for the purpose of observing reviving Nature, must go forthwith with "Gray's sweet mind," must be in such a mood as was his when he conceived his beautiful "Elegy." Every passing season brings with it its own special thought for us, and to each one who will, as Ruskin said, these thoughts shall be "houses built without hands for our souls to live in, proof against all adversity ; bright fancies, satisfied memories, noble histories, treasure-houses of precious and restful thoughts which care cannot disturb nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us."

"The gardener is the trustee of a world of fair living things."

—WILLIAM ROBINSON.

JANUARY

"Where are the swallows fled?
Frozen and dead
Perchance upon some bleak and stormy shore?
Oh, doubting heart!
Far over purple seas
They wait in sunny ease,
The balmy southern breeze
To bring them to their northern homes once more.

The sun has hid his rays
These many days;
Will dreary hours never leave the earth?
Oh, doubting heart!
The stormy clouds on high
Veil the same sunny sky
That soon, (for spring is nigh),
Shall wake the summer into golden mirth."

—ADELAIDE PROCTER.

THE course of the grey January river which winds near to the garden is through many meadows, past many copses, now leafless and almost berryless. Beneath the clear sky of April-blue how joyously this same river was flowing, singing upon its way, its voice blending harmoniously with the song of birds and bees that sang amid the breaking leaves and opening flowers; how refreshing to the eye it silently glided in the hot July noons by meads where drowsily grazed the cattle, its languid breast, lily jewelled, shimmering in the light, fanned by whispering boughs o'erhead. It was indeed a fair scene then, as it wended its way like a golden thread through green fields between the numberless elegant

plants that people a river's banks. Then, at that season, "it is," as a well-known writer says, "for ever striving to tell us something, for ever imploring us to listen and to understand; we listen, we strain, we try to take in its vague meaning; it is telling us sweet and mighty secrets, letting drop precious talismanic words." In autumn how many of us have watched the river winding by thinning woods beneath the fierce sunsets of wild skies, and followed with our eyes the floating leaves upon its swollen foam-laden breast like miniature ships upon an angry tide. But the wintry river is altogether different: it is silent and sullen and grey. Along its banks, dotted here and there, stand the grey pollarded willows, and upon the oaks, of a like hue, a few lingering crisp red leaves, each

"The last of its clan
Dances as often as dance it can."

Besides these two trees every other is of the same colour, made greyer by the veil of mist which January flings around all things, while the sky above partakes more frequently of this monotonous wintry tint. Yet beautiful withal is the world in its unvaried uniform of quiet colour. The frost-waves so often blown by the east wind this month across the meadows have to-day left their impressions upon the short grass, having arranged themselves into even rows. Sometimes in summer we have noticed these inland waves while standing by the slopes of wheatfields near the sea's marge, when the breeze brings the kiss of the sea that lightly tumbles upon each ear of golden grain, and as it steals over the yellowing acres mimics the ocean a-near.

The impressive silence of the leafless woods which we knew

a short while since is now broken by the birds singing merrily, their notes growing sweeter day by day, to herald the time of the year, the beautiful season of

“Spring, that sets all Nature free.”

Ofttimes now, as the season advances, the grey tint is banished, the veil from the sun's face is lifted, and again old Sol deigns to smile upon the world; then quite beautiful is the January river. The dead reeds and rushes, the dried panicles and umbels of grasses and plants are like a tangled mass of luminous threads which in fancy seem to be the woof and warp on Nature's loom with which Spring will weave into the green meadow-carpets her wondrous patterns in gold and silver flower-stars.

"The man who has planted a garden feels that he has done something for the good of the world."

—CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

JANUARY

The short days fly to meet the longer days
Now the old year has said its last good-bye ;
Though Winter will abide, though darkness stays,
The short days fly.

Beguide the heart to dreams of Springtime nigh,
Thrush, syren of the winter ! sweet thy lays
I hear as soon as night has left the sky ;

Singer of sequent songs, there 'mid the bays
And bud-decked laurustinus, tune and try
Thy Spring-prelude, 'tis to Spring-perfect ways
The short days fly.

TO-DAY the air is clear and the sun shines brightly, making even the bare trees picturesque. The new year has called to the flowers. The brave snowdrops have pushed up their tiny spears of green through the ground—they have conquered winter : and notice, be the earth never so hard with frost or long covered with snow, they are ever the victors and win the way for their tender flowerets. The mezerion (*Daphne*) is tipped with buds, and waits impatiently for the early days of true Spring to show their beautiful blushing coral flowers. This is our garden's most treasured January flower. Noticeable is the hawthorn hedge sprinkled with tiny rubies, which, weeks later yet, will be transformed into emeralds. Earth seems to be glad that the days are lengthening, although scarcely perceivable at present ; yet its joy is expressed in many a dainty picture seen around.

A flock of lapwings fly over the garden from the quiet of the distant upland hedged with furze. Across a sky of cloudless blue of June-like brilliancy they wing, their dark pinions stretched out to the calm day, beating the air leisurely and measurably as is their wont. To-day, as they pass, they utter no weird cries, and although they loftily fly, their white breasts are visible beneath the shadow of their outstretched wings. The lapwing's home is an ideal haunt of peace. It is a breezy upland, a favourite place of ours in the hot July day; at every season a refreshing calm broods over all, and when wandering there one wonders if in truth he can be so near to the city of cities! On that upland to-day, from where the lapwings rose—and will doubtless return—all is grey around, if blue above. The distant woods on all sides are sepic studies save for a few scattered clumps of firs; the grey and sepia tints seem to me but the ashes of the burnt-out fires of Autumn, which were here seen flaming in all their glory when

“Leaf by golden leaf
Crumbles the gorgeous year.”

"Pity it is that the word garden should be so vulgarised by
worldly gardens."

—ALICE MEYNELL.

JANUARY

With laurustine and aconite
The garden ways first colours show,
And every day the lengthening light.

Now all but o'er is Winter's night,
For here and there the snowdrops blow
With laurustine and aconite.

A sky of blue, a cloud of white,
A stream set free runs swift below,
And every day the lengthening light.

Oh, welcome are the first flowers to sight,
Where by some path new life doth glow
With laurustine and aconite.

So each day viewing Winter's flight,
Our eyes some new-born beauty know,
And every day the lengthening light.

Spring's herald comes from wintry height,
The giftless garden to endow
With laurustine and aconite,
And every day the lengthening light.

THE flowers are coming back! The yellow aconite in little clusters of gold by garden ways, still desolate of other bloom, tells that not so very far off Spring is impatiently waiting to make her shy entry into the world, and unfold to us her fair treasures. The laurustine, too, has opened at last, a cyme of white and pink, waiting through many a weary week of grey before venturing to do so. But the aconite is

February's flower, and one to be much appreciated in the days of cold winds. The sunshine, growing more fitful—showing a world light and bright by turns, the surety of Spring's nearness—seems to search out and show to us their yellow blossoms as if to compel one to admire them. And yet, if one just reflects, the garden seems never to be bereft of Nature's gold: when the last leaf of Autumn faded, the *Jasmine nudiflorum* opened its yellow stars, that glittered bravely and undimmed, no matter what weather; and now, at their passing away, the yellow aconites take their place. What a golden chain of flowers will, link by link, encircle the year in the months to follow!—crocus, daffodil, primrose and buttercup, and many another blossom taking for tints the whole gamut of gold. The author, in his recent book, "The Chronicle of a Cornish Garden," says of the aconite: "Since Christmas Day my Winter aconites have been sending up experimental blooms. I like to watch the daily lengthening for eight days of the yellow dome, one of whose functions is to protect the ripe pollen from rain. As the short outer row of stamens first ripens, the short sepals suffice for its protection, but day after day, a larger and more central row ripens and requires protection, and each day the sepals grow larger to meet the new need. In spite of the pretty nectaries, I do not think the bees will visit them at present. As most of the early Spring flowers are produced from last year's reserve store of nutriment, they commonly appear before the leaves are well developed. They spend last year's savings, and are able to cut a fine figure before most plants have begun even to accumulate the wherewithal to produce flowers." In "Days and Hours in a Garden," the author has praised so well this period of the year: "The dear little Winter aconite, each bud of pure, clear yellow, surrounded with its green frill

of leaves! . . . And there's a vision of the sweetest face in the world—the first pale glimpse of Spring with her snowdrop crown." It is not because these earliest flowers have any special beauty to recommend them that they are so welcome, and so much written about; it is because they are the first, for were they to bloom amid the floral opulence they would scarce be noticed. Was it not Emerson who said, "to the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty"? and surely at this time more especially so.

In a corner of the garden, ere yet January is over by some days, a violet breath upon the air made me seek for the sapphire gems which so faithfully blossom at this time year after year. Perhaps no flower, except the rose, has been so much written about, or more loved, than the violet.

"Still do children," says a writer, "and common care-laden people seek the faithful and beloved violet family in their sequestered haunts, and draw from them the comfort, inspiration, and hope they are so well fitted to impart. Not the less do they appreciate them in garden precincts, where, in richer dress, but with the same friendly countenance, they welcome all who love them. In these latter days, the care and attention of which they are so worthy have been lavished on them as never before. That they have amply repaid such attention many a choice garden bears testimony. In such a garden there are beds of them which are true poems, expressed in tenderest hues, from deepest purple to purest white; and which contain many a blossom which enshrines memories as thrilling and thoughts as inspiring as its little woodland ancestor treasured for the poets of old."

And from the humble woodland ancestor what exquisite

varieties have with patient care been produced for our delight and the garden's beauty: those lovely single varieties, such as "The Czar," with its large, deep violet flowers; the exquisitely-perfumed "California," the rich purple "Welsiana" and "Devoniensis"; and in the double varieties, the "De Parma," with its pale lavender hue; the mauve "Neapolitan," with its white eye, among a host of others.

"I planted a rose-tree in my garden,
In early days when the year was young;
I thought it would bear me roses, roses,
While nights were dewy and days were long."
—MATHILDE BLIND.

FEBRUARY

Beneath the silver silence of the snow,
That falleth late,
The green leaves wait,
Asleep with folded hands.
Impatiently a flower waits to blow,
A bird to sing.
No song doth ring
Across the frozen lands.

A silent prelude, ere the feathered choirs
Fast westward throng
With new-tuned song,
To blossom-time's first day.
Beneath the silver silence, flower-fires
Wait yet to shed
Gold flame and red
To make the garden gay.

"A garden enclosed."

—SONG OF SOLOMON.

"We enjoy in gardening the pure delicacies of agriculture."

—JOURBERT.

FEBRUARY

The sleeping Spring awakes, its eyes unclose,
And now at last the dream-kept silence breaks ;
With burst of melody the Winter goes,
The sleeping Spring awakes.

Upon the ambient air the violet makes
An incense that forever heartward flows ;
Dreams Springward pass, thought winter's world forsakes.

Tender or cruel be the wind that blows,
Thoughts drift to lilies dreaming 'neath the lake's
Soft surface, silver-filled with melting snows.
The sleeping Spring awakes !

"TO watch the corn grow and the blossom set ; to draw hard breath over ploughshare or spade ; to read, to think, to love, to hope, to pray,—these are the things that make men happy." These beautiful words of Ruskin's come with greater force as we look upon the world of early spring. Busy cottagers are in their little gardens, and their hearts are filled with a joy no city-pleasure could give, "drawing hard breath" over the upturned mould. In the field is heard the sound of the ploughman with his team ; he is whistling as he guides the ploughshare. Yes ! this is true happiness ; and we, beholding them, feel somewhat of the pleasure steal over us—we, whose life-path is in the city—and the sweet breath of early spring blows, as it were, over the furrows that the ploughshare of Time has made, and the blossoms of hope cover the bare places !

To-day the fields—in the hedge-shadows especially—are

trellised with the silver of the lingering frost, as the morning opens, with an equal mingling of Winter and Spring. The blackbird searching for food is visible from a distance there in the meadow, its plumage glistening, its yellow beak sparkling. Above, the sky is that of earliest Spring, and one of an ever-changeable blue, although not that which April delights in. That the time of Spring is almost here we may know at a glance: the furze is growing yellow with unblown buds, and the stream, clear-grown and strained of all its dead leaves, winds through the meadows like a slender silver vein, encircling the copse,—where primroses and anemones grow impatient to blossom—with a narrow band of reflected light.

The snow has melted away, which lately fell to a great depth. The snow permits of a silence unlike any other quietude, and also shows many a beauty of outline which one discovers suddenly. Above the silver silence of the snow the golden stars of the winter jasmine take the eye with its mass of colour; and how green, too, shows the grass where first the land bares its breast to melting snows and the February sunlight! February snow shows many a graceful curve in old buildings; with our late snows a cluster of old houses are made beautiful beyond words, that all the summer, with their ill-shaped roofs and chimneys, appear so hopeless and comfortless, yet with the magic touch of the snow, looking so happily contented—almost grand! For a melodious note sounded in praise of winter one should go to Thoreau's "Walden," colour and sound therein are so faithfully recorded. "After a still winter night," he writes, "I woke with the impression that some question had been put to me, which I had been endeavouring in vain to answer

THE PLOUGHMAN
WITH HIS TEAM.

in my sleep, as what—how—when—where? But there was dawning Nature, in whom all creatures live, looking in at my broad windows with serene and satisfied face. I awoke to an answered question, to Nature and daylight. The snow lying deep on the earth, dotted with young pines, and the very slope of the hill on which my house is placed, seemed to say 'Forward!'" With what a true ear he listens to the sounds of Nature. He notices the many varying tints, and that passage from "The Pond in Winter" will suit to illustrate these present days: "Like the water, the Walden ice, seen near at hand, has a green tint, but at the distance, is beautifully blue, and you can easily tell it from the white ice of the river, or the merely greenish ice of some ponds, a quarter of a mile off. Sometimes one of those great cakes slip from the iceman's sled into the village street, and lies there for a week like a great emerald, an object of interest to all passers. . . . Perhaps the blue colour of water and ice is due to the light and air they contain, and the almost transparent is the bluest. Ice is an interesting subject for contemplation!" For sights and sounds of winter we must go to Thoreau for a faithful record and wonderful insight into these days, a time to most of us when every sound seems muffled and everything that is beautiful in Nature hidden.

"A garden is a beautiful book, writ by the finger of God; every flower and every leaf is a letter."

—DOUGLAS JERROLD.

FEBRUARY

"THE love of Nature is a great gift," says Sir John Lubbock, and one must have somewhat of this love to acknowledge some of the many beauties that the barren land of the Winter season affords. Indeed, there are many things of interest to delight the eye, which are looked for in vain amid the overflowing glories and bountiful floral tributes of Spring, Summer, and Autumn. We need not go far from our homesteads to behold some of them. There is the yellow jasmine (*Jasmine nudiflorum*), mentioned before, very beautiful during the winter, and such a favourite with me. In February

"The yellow jasmine holds a silver jewel
Of frost, a bloom to match the rays divine
Of sun, whose death tells of the Spring's renewal,
The yellow jasmine."

Note its tender beauty, and take to heart some of its quiet joy. To-day it literally sparkles with yellow stars in the Spring-like sunlight; notice, too, the graceful interweavings of its leafless stems, and how much is added to its beauty when gathered to the heart of some old wall, tinted with that mellow tone which only the hand of Time can give: it seems to suit so well the softened colours of crusted lichens and mosses that Winter makes visible. These tender greys and greens of mosses and lichens are another of February's possessions: they are lost to the eye, hidden at other seasons by the overwhelming foliage, and like the tint of leaf, their

hues never pall, but breathe a quietude in a land of rest more restful.

Verdurous Spring comes on apace, and soon its vernal revealings will throng the land: bird and flower and blue sky, all the mirth of the season babbled in song by amber-beaked blackbird and silvery-tongued thrush; all its joy given out in the new green leaf; all its promise in the blue sky made up of laughter and of tears—but this is yet a gladness unborn: a joy soon to come.—But Spring is journeying fast westward:

Fast down the vale through hazyland,
To make the world a daisy-land,
Spring journeys fast from lazy land,
Her voice is on the breeze.
Spring dons a robe all magic-wove,
And paints a sky so fair above,
Makes every hedge a house of love,
With nesting melodies.

Sing out your song, blithe bird on bough,
Wherein is told your tender vow
To mate,—we listen to it now,
And marvel at your praise.
Birds! fill Spring's hall with sweetest lays;
Ambrosial embroideries,
Unfold your leaves, your patterns raise,
To drape the sylvan ways!

"Garden flowers,—sweet budding wonders."

—JEAN INGELow.

FEBRUARY

I LOVE these days of ending Winter, when the growing light of lengthening day makes the air musical with the birds' sylvan melodies. The mornings yet open mist-enfolded, and have all the appearance of mid-winter that one almost expects a day of shadowless grey. But no! The blushing sun is soon seen to be piercing the gloom which is fast vanishing. The birds are the first to tell of ending Winter, for close at hand is the bridal-day of the birds—St. Valentine's Day and St. Valentine's Spring. What, too, betokens more Spring's nearness than the gentle showers interleaved with bright sunshine? You may have watched these February' showers, when the sky is of one tint, and the beautiful pictures their endings paint when a great gap of blue is seen at last, and all in a moment the clouds seem to be broken up into huge portions, wandering away, masses of foam, the tint of tarnished silver! These and countless signs—the snowdrops in the border, the frilled aconite beneath the laurustinus—tell of hastening, ending Winter!

Little clusters of starry leaflets scatter the hedgerow banks to-day with patches of bright green, and many seeds have burst their Winter bonds, each sending out a pair of oval leaflets like outstretched wings airily poised; they are the dainty stitchwort and goose-grass, that hang the hedges with graceful draperies throughout the year's most beautiful time. The first shy leaf-buds are out upon the hawthorn, and Winter's barrenness will soon be forgotten: all its ruin

cleared away or hidden under Nature's wealth of new flower and leaf.

Fields are fast showing the new beauty of the reviving grass, and the green stretch of park-land is set as with great grey pearls, which are but the collected pools of rain of the past days. Here and there are scattered the fallen arms of the trees; and beneath them all are the many tokens of mingled life and death.

Here among the skeletonised leaves and fallen beechmast (displaying its seeds still more brilliantly), the celandine has spread its first perfect leaflets. How good to be out in the country "when shy buds venture out," when the first warm sunlight is caressing the land, and to behold the larch-twigs swelling, and the bud-filled willow-branches hastening to burst into golden, fragrant "palm."

"In the culture of flowers there cannot, by their very nature, be anything solitary or exclusive. The scholar and the statesman, men of peace and men of war, have agreed in all ages to delight in gardens."
—CHARLES DICKENS.

FEBRUARY

(*St. Valentine*)

"SLOW and sure comes up the golden year," sings Tennyson, and we may even now feel the spell of Spring's early dawn! The "long night's black" has gone; we have listened to the "herald-melodies" of the birds; we have heard the first lay of the lark in the earlier growing dawns. St. Valentine's Day is past, and to use Chaucer's own words—

"Now, welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,
That hast this wintre's weders over shake,
And driven a-wey the longe nyghtes blake;
Seynt Valentyne, that art ful hy on lofte,
Thus syngen smale fowls for thy sake."

Although the age when St. Valentine was honoured by lovers has long passed away, the birds still greet him merrily, and are now supposed to have entered upon household cares. Across the ploughed fields we have heard the partridge calling for a mate, and the rooks have in their "caw" that peculiar accent of the mating season. In and out among the budding branches the finches dart, keeping up an endless twitter; the sparrows frolic and fight among the ivy; in the fir-branches and among the breaking willows the thrush and blackbird more lustily call. Yet, alas! all this joyfulness will be checked anon, for the time o' year is but "St. Valentine's Spring"; there will yet most likely be snow-whitened fields and frosty window-panes; and vegetation, rapidly hastening to greet the Spring, will be doomed

to disappointment, checked in its ardour and compelled to stay its hurrying.

Spring is coming. Although tardy to show the hidden beauties which we know are lying as yet a secret treasure, we are aware of a new life abroad, and of Nature resurgent from the soil. Yet the beauty will be shown ere long, and, as a writer says, the bare land will be—

“Some infinite world of flowers, transformed
By unseen wands of wind.”

But everywhere around to-day are sure precursors of the Spring. An hour of sudden breezes between the calm wholly changes the aspect of the land; or over the satisfied brightness a sweep of shadow from fast-travelling cloud tempers the over brightness of the light, the very herald of spring, and a rehearsal of the marriage day of March and April, acted in Nature's “Masque of Spring.” We can almost picture Nature preparing her colours, so beautifully told by Emerson when he says—

“What joy in rosy waves outpoured”;

a colour that

“Fires gardens with a blaze of tulips,”

and bids

“The ground-pines wash their rusty green,
The maple tops their crimson tint”;

while from day to day

“. . . The murmuring rivers of sap
Mount in the pipes of the trees,
Giddy with day, to the topmost spire,
Which for a spike of tender green
Bartered its powdery cap;
And the colours of joy in the bird,
And the love in its carol heard.”

Fresh odours of newly-turned earth, with its leafy fragrance bringing back autumn remembrances; a cluster of blackthorn stars in the hedge catching the eyes and entangling them in its beauty; or suddenly, under brown of leaf-retaining oaks, there holds our vision a drift of celandine leaves, whose rich store of buds tell of the gallant show of colour they will make, and the golden carpet they will spread for the swallow. Even these beauties have hiding within them the fuller treasure of summer.

On the floor of the upland wood the exquisitely cut foliage of the wind-flower (*Anemone nemorosa*) is showing its vernal green, above which will wave in the breezes of March and April one of the fairest of our woodland floral bells; deep in the heart of our historic woods they live their brief lives, lavishing their pearly beauty upon the tenants of their leafy home:

“Deep in the wood the wind-flowers live,
Their beauties to the green leaves give;
And with birds the gladness share
Of rain, the sunlight, and the air.

They seek no human aid to bring
Stems delicate, to blossoming;
Untold they rise from out the sod,
Type of the care that comes from God.”

This *Ranunculaceæ* order of plants, of which the anemone or wind-flower is a member, is truly a lovely family, and for the most part blossom in early spring. There is celandine to begin with, the crowsfoot and buttercups, the marsh-marigolds, the pheasants'-eyes (*Adonis autumnàlis*) of our cornfields, and the globe-flower (*Trollius Europæus*).

We have much to be thankful for to make up for the shortcomings of this moist climate of ours. For instance, the joys that crown the long, wet winter, when the "rathe primrose" stars the mossy copse, when the day has come for the winter to bid a final adieu, and the sunlight seems to say—

"Gloomy winter's now awa',"

and a hand invisible is

"Leading up the golden year."

"Every day in garden and greenhouse brings a new surprise
—a new delight."

—MORTIMER COLLINS.

FEBRUARY

AS yet the hawthorn hedges give but little signs of waking ;
not yet will the scales fall from their leaf-buds ; they
will not, however much the sun may shine, be wooed too soon
from slumber ; although a few of our deciduous shrubs and
trees are showing a faint tinge of green, it is not these that
are Spring's first and foremost harbinger. Surely it is the
snowdrop, the

"First-born of the year's delight,
Pride of the dewy glade,
In vernal green and virgin white,
Thy vestal robes arrayed ;

They twinkle to the wintry moon,
And cheer th' ungenial day,
And tell us all will glisten soon,
As green and bright as they."

Fair white blossom that now is with us, coming with no clarion
call, sweet harbinger of Spring ! Year by year, with unfailing
precision, they come with their message of hope, be the days
fraught with sunshine, or the world lying white under grey
skies. They come to us the very image of simplicity, the
very pattern of punctuality, in their garments of white and
green, ever sure of our welcome. In form and colour this
flower is an exquisite study, with its blossom wonderfully
poised on a stem by a thread-like connection, so delicate that
it nods in the faintest breeze, yet, on the other hand, so strong
that it has power to upbear and burst its bond of snow !

As I walk down the roads by the orchards I hear the sound

of voices that at last break the stillness which has held it for the weeks past, that arise from the men engaged in pruning the fruit bushes. Those bushes which have received their attention are now evenly shaped, while from a distance these bushes seem dotted with white, showing very plainly where the pruner's knife has been. In this same place how sweetly the birds sing : it seems as though the message the snowdrop whispers they tell forth in their songs.

Along the hedgerows the ground-ivy and the dead-nettles are showing their first tint of lighter green ; shepherd's-purse and dandelion also make their presence known along the roadsides. But these are only weeds, some will say ; truly, in one sense they are, but they are the flowers of Nature's own garden. "Weeds?" asks Professor Miall, "What is a weed? A plant that persists in coming up where it is not wanted. Weeds may be beautiful ; at least, few of us would deny beauty to the poppy, and the dandelion, and the corncockle." Many accomplished writers have spoken a good word for the despised weeds. "There is a sort of sadness about them," says Nathaniel Hawthorne ; "perhaps if we could penetrate Nature's secrets we should find that what we call weeds are more essential to the well-being of the world than the most precious fruit or grain." Canon Ellacombe's "In a Gloucester Garden" tells us "A weed is a good plant in a wrong place. I say a *good* plant advisedly, having a full faith that where Nature plants it, it fills a right place. Daisies are not, perhaps, in their right place in lawns, but I should be sorry to see my lawn quite free from them, and so, I am sure, would the children."

So at this season, when the groundsel comes tipped with

gold to our gardens, when the chickweed appears, its foliage scattered with tiny pearls, and every other weed comes to us as one of Spring's harbingers, we will give them their due and acknowledge that there *is* a beauty, an individual charm, about each of them. For "everything contributes somewhat to the use and benefit, or to the beauty of the whole; no weed grows out of the earth, no insect creeps upon the ground, which hath not elegance and yields not its profit; nothing is abominable or despicable, though all things are not alike amiable or admirable." Would that this beautiful sentence of Bishop Burrow's had an echo in the hearts of many more of us!

"High-walled gardens green and old."
—TENNYSON.

FEBRUARY

When first the violet in moss bed hides,
Hastening, the wind its perfumed message bears ;
What a sweet mask the face of Nature wears,
What joy her smile, her breath, so brief, betides.
Sweet time, when primrose stars o'er meads are cast,
And fair anemones light up the shade
Of woods where first ambrosial growths are made
To tell where Spring has lately flitted past.
But this the promise of the violet,
Beside the frost-dumb stream that seeks the vale :
The cuckoo soon to tell its echoing tale
To woods that day by day grow greener yet,
When earth wears first her smiling mask of flowers,
In April's earliest rain-threaded hours.

EVERY new day, with a gladder note the birds in the garden awaken the dawn, seemingly with a more impatient note, and one that rings more sweetly. They have indeed a very charm of their own, and a peculiar magic in their song to sweeten the bitter cold of the February dawns. A first thought of Spring came to me when, in a warm afternoon of last week—to all appearance a wayfarer from Spring—in a walled garden, hidden in a thicket of yew, a thrush was fluting a silver melody, and at twilight, the not far distant spring seemed more pronounced, for in the tall elms the loud chatter of birds told with an exactness the time of the year, that it was February—the birds' love time. Emerson has said: "To the attentive eye each moment of the year has its own beauty," and many would add that February has a charm for the ear. Just as a first flower stimulates the eye,

if it be one of colour, the "passionate blue" of the violet, the "rathe primrose," from moss-bed shyly peeping, so a bird song, newly tuned, stimulates the ear to a wonderful joy. It is certainly the thrush—"February's bird," as Helen Milman says—that sings lustily early in the morning and well up to dark, more in the woods than in the garden at first—the certainty that Spring is coming bubbling up in each triple cadence of his song. He sings on rainy days more than other birds do, and prefers them to bright sunshine; perhaps he realises how loving songs can recall sunshine in dark times.

This sweet bird-praise sings the author of "Days and Hours in a Garden": "Dear birds! Does any one ever think, I wonder, sitting in the summer shade near 'some moist, bird-haunted English lawn,' how dull it would be without them—how much they enhance for us the grace and charm of the garden and the country? It is their gay light-heartedness that is so delightful, that we should miss them so much if they were not there. Who ever saw a grave bird? . . . Their very labours of nest-building, and of feeding their young ones, are done like a merry bit of child's play! The birds' never-failing interest in life is like a tonic to those who love them."

"In the heart of the garden the merry bird chants."

—TENNYSON.

FEBRUARY

THE birds are the first to announce the coming of Spring.

Long hushed by frost and the grey dreariness of Winter, and in wonderment at the earth, silent and bare in its Winter-trance, and now on the point of its reawakening, they tell out their joy in song : and how very sweet are the early melodies of the birds ! It is when one beholds the sun-bright land and the clear distances, when the crocus opens its slender vases of opal or golden bloom in the yet desolate garden, the nearness of Spring is no longer a fancy but a reality :—

First pleasures now begun ; warm kisses fall
Upon the golden crocus from the sun,
And in the wood the earliest Spring-birds call.
First pleasures now begun.

Of Springtime almost here, of Winter done,
Speak earliest violets 'neath the southern wall,
And of the world to smiles again re-won.

O brave, wild birds to dare ; the winds blow all
From wintry ways so dark, so sere and dun !
O bright brave flowers freed from Winter's thrall !
First pleasures now begun.

"Methinks I love all common things;
The common air, the common flower."

—ANON.

FEBRUARY

HOW true is the saying that our greatest joys in life are not always to be found in that which is the most costly and rare, but more often in those commonplace things around us; and, while Winter lingers and Spring delays her coming, many of these "common joys" abound. A week ago a few blossoms of the yellow coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) opened its first leafless blossoms, covering the grey wintry clods with their bright gold; and surely this forerunner of Spring—this "weed"—preaching in the wilderness of Winter, the advent of the year's sweetest season, surely gave, to many in sympathy with the ways of Nature, a keen joy, a pure delight! Even ere the leaves of this blossom have scarcely appeared, and the flower-stalks are holding a pompon of down, and we may often in a later period of the year see the goldfinch gathering the pappus of this plant with which to line its nest. This common wayside weed, brightening these cold days, silently whispers a thousand happy phrases, and conjures up before us the fairest of sylvan scenes not far distant—woods bathed in green above floors of bluebells bluer than the serenest sky; fields of shimmering gold and daisy-spangled, edged with the hawthorn's silver. This is a little of the joy which the coltsfoot brings to me, poor wayside flower, that hardly any one deigns to notice.

Proofs of the late mild weather, now, alas, checked, lie around us in the almost bursting leaf-buds upon the lilac and the new green shoots adorning the privet hedge. After a

day of bright, warm sunshine of a week ago, they were suddenly covered with the sparkling crystals of the frost. Undismayed, they will brave it and grow still more buxom with the sunshine of the next warm day!

It is violet-time in sheltered corners of the garden, but not yet has this sweetest of spring flowers put forth its blossoms in its native place—the woods and hedgerow banks. Very soon we shall see them there, or, unseen, catch their perfume upon the breeze. Under the hedges is waiting to be awakened one of the loveliest of our wild climbers, the white bryony (*Bryonia dioica*). “All winter, the mystic root [of the bryony] lies hidden, awaiting its appointed time,” says E. V. B. in one of her delightful books. “On a day in spring suddenly up springs a group of delicate green stalks, and they, as soon as they have seen the sun in heaven, delay not to put forth all the strength stored under the ground in the big, ugly root.”

Already the marsh-marigold is preparing to light the sides of the stream with its golden chalice, which blossom has for its name “King-cup” and “Golden-loves.” It is this and many another yellow blossom—the lesser celandine, the cowslip—that greet the coming time, the sweetest of the year,

“When sweet-breathing Spring unfolds the bud.”

" . . . A garden . . . planted for use where wholesome
herbs should grow."

—CHARLES LAMB.

"So bury me by some sweet garden side."

—OMAR KHAYYAM.

MARCH

They come, the Lenten-lilies, flowers of March,
At call of thrush, when first the blackbird's note
Upon the ambient air afar doth float,
Ere yet the faintest green has graced the larch.
In dale they throng, these bright battalions,
Opening their chalices as if to catch
The Spring's pure wine, bright, burnished cups that match
The sunlight's gold ; trooping by millions.
Long ere the meads are pied with daisies white,
Or calls the cuckoo over leagues of may,
Thou bringest us and givest of thy gold.
Fading before the callow young take flight ;
Thy beauty gone before the first true day
Of Spring doth dawn when love and life are told !

"What is our love of flowers, our calm happiness in our gardens, but a dim recollection of our first home in paradise, and a yearning for the Land of Promise?"

—DEAN HOLE.

"A garden, large or small, should look both orderly and rich."
—WILLIAM MORRIS.

MARCH

Comes burly March with blustering breeze ;
The March-birds' mad and merry din,
From every branch of breaking trees
Now fills each lane with silvery glees.

With longer lives the days are crowned,
Now that on moss-floor'd copse and glen
The perfumed violets are found,
And emerald leaflets are unwound.

The birds on newly tuned lyres,
Rehearse their anthems to the Spring ;
The rooks whirl round the tall tree-spires,
The primrose lights its golden fires.

WHILE Spring advances upon the world, Winter is often met with upon the way ; and although Winter is ushered again into our presence, it seems an alien visitor. At last the tall elms just beyond the garden are tenanted, and the birds, a dark patch, are silhouetted against a blue sky, sitting as sentinels beside their nests. Not long since how busy these birds were ; and I noticed them more especially so just before sunset, flying with twigs—to which the withered leaves were still adhering—across the fields, the sunset light changing their burden to sprays of gold. I am never tired of watching the blue-tits swinging on the budding branches, perched in their dainty fashion and attempting many a wonderful and surprising attitude.

The little wood is full of curious, quiet, life-stirring sounds, a blending of bird-notes—the metallic twitter of the

wren in particular—the fluttering of ivy leaves clinging to some aged trunk as they catch the first Spring-breeze rushing through the yet leafless branches.

But Spring must woo the world to loveliness in her graceful fashion for many days; the daffodils must die, and the land grow to lovely green “before the swallow dares” to cross the sea, again to skim our loved English fields and lanes and rivers. But how often is the promise of Spring a delusion, for March frequently brings the coldest of weather, and when the fulfilment of the year’s loveliest season seems almost a reality, Winter returns, recalling such a time as George Meredith describes in his “Reading of Earth”:

“Bursts from a rending East in flaws
The young green leaflets’ harrier, sworn
To strew the garden, strip the shaws,
And show our Spring with banner torn.”

"I am always dreaming of having delightful gardens for special seasons where one good flower should predominate."

—GERTRUDE Jekyll.

MARCH

THE beautiful daffodils, or Lent-lilies, are with us once again, and have taken "the winds of March with their beauty." To see these flowers at their best we must visit them in their native haunts: for instance, in some quiet dale where they spread their cloth of gold, or swaying in the wind on the river's marge under the bare branches, or beneath the budding willows—two ideal spots that I know of, not far from the garden. Here they are seen at their loveliest, their rich yellow notched and curled sepals and petals exquisitely contrasting with the vivid green of their sword-like leaves. It is indeed a picture not soon to fade from memory.

"Earth has not anything to show more fair"

than where in the March pastures

"A host of golden daffodils"

are

"Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

Wordsworth, lover of every woodland blossom, never did greater justice to any flower than in his stanzas to the daffodil, written at Grasmere, when the Lent-lilies were in blossom—on the margin of Ullswater, nodding their golden heads beside the dancing and foaming waves. The daffodil (*Narcissus Pseudo-Narcissus*) is a member of that order of plants known as *Amaryllidaceæ*, an extensive tribe of large and beautiful flowers found principally in the tropics, our own country claiming very few representatives; and it is doubtful

whether the daffodil is really indigenous to Great Britain. Nevertheless, we regard it as our own Spring blossom, coming what time

"March makes sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling,
And hours of fruitful breath."

With the daffodil (*Narcissus*) the following beautiful classic myth is associated. "Narcissus, a beautiful youth, son of Cepheissus and Liriope, was inaccessible to the feeling of love; and the nymph Echo, who was enamoured of him, died of grief. But Nemesis, to punish him, caused him to see his own image reflected in a fountain, whereupon he became so enamoured of it, that he gradually pined away, until he was metamorphosed into the flower which bears his name." Those old herbalists, Gerard and Parkinson, have written in their delightful and quaint volumes on the daffodil. John Gerard, in his "Herball" (London, 1597) says: "Daffodil, or Narcissus, is of two sorts; the flowers are both white, the one having in the middle a purple circle or coronet, the other with a yellow cuppe. . . . The first of the daffodils is that with the purple crowne or circle, having small, narrow leaves, thick, fat, and full of slimie juice, among which riseth up a naked stalke, smoothe and hollow, of a foote high, bearing at the top a fair, milk-white flower, growing forth of a hood, or thin filme, such as onions are wrapped in." Parkinson, in his "Paradise in Sole," &c. (London, 1629), says: "There hath beene great confusion among many of our moderne writers of plants, distinguishing the manifold varieties of daffodils; for every one almost, without consideration of kinds or forme or other speciale note, give the name so diversly one from another." He first mentions in his book—having for its second title, "A Garden

of Pleasant Flowers,"—the Incomparable Daffodil, or None Such, which, he says, "hath three or four long broad leaves, of a greyish greene colour, among which riseth up a stalk two feet high at the least, at the toppe whereof, out of a thinner skinnie huske, as all daffodils have, cometh forth one large, single flower and no more, usually consisting of sixe very pale yellow leaves, almost round at the point, with a large cup in the middle, somewhat yellower than the leaves, the bottome whereof next the stock is narrow and round, rising wider to the mouth, which is very large and open and unevenly cut or indented about the edges. The cuppe doth resemble the chalice, that in former days with us, and beyond the seas is still used to hold the Sacramentall wine, that is, with a narrower bottome and a wide mouth. . . . The flowers have no scent at all." Gerard gives a list of their supposed virtues; but Parkinson says: "Howsoever . . . others do give unto some of them speciall properties, both for inward and outward diseases, yet know I not any in these days with us that apply any of them as a remedy for any grief."

"Daffodils are the hardiest, showiest, and most variable of early Spring flowers. . . . No good garden should be without the best of the lovely varieties now grown." These are the words used by the author of "The English Flower Garden," and with a little care the smallest garden with them may be made beautiful when flowers are limited. Among the newer sorts of daffodils surely lovelier flowers were never seen than "The Duchess of Westminster," "Mrs. J. M. B. Camm," and "Victoria," beautiful bi-colours, with large white perianths, and yellow or cream-coloured trumpets, or the pretty Hoop Petticoat, and the trumpet daffodil, which looks so at home when planted so as to become naturalised in the grass or woods.

"O my garden full of singing, from the birds that house therein."

—PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

MARCH

SURE token of the Springtime again in our midst is the presence of the daffodils, those hardy, poet-loved flowers of the meadow and copse, now awaking and almost on the point of blossoming, the March breezes rioting among their lanceolate leaves. There are meadows I know of near to this Middlesex Garden that soon will be golden in places with their blooms. To be their lyric poet is left to the thrush; and notice, how more melodiously he sings when in their vicinity—

" . . . Wise thrush : he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture ! "

Yes, the thrush and the daffodil spell Spring ; and how he loves the rain, too, ever singing a still more silvery strain, as if refreshed by the passing shower, when the sun is out again and the land smells sweet with the clouds' tribute. How swift at this season is each dark cloud to show its silvery lining ! One hardly knows upon which to bestow most admiration, whether it be for the song of birds—at their best at dawn and twilight—or for the beauty of changing hours. Perhaps the greater share of our delight goes to the birds in the

"Season of magical skies, when glad larks greet
Spring at heav'n's bright gate."

There is something invigorating and life-giving in the air as it blows about the garden, kept too long flowerless,

save for here and there, where the white-rock is tipped with bloom, and the crocus is keeping its golden petals tightly closed from the bitter wind. And the pink almond, usually one of the most lovely of flowers that accompany the daffodil, seems to be a long way off from flowering; its pink stars that, shining in the year's dawn sky, tell of the near loveliest time of all the year.

"Come, thou south wind, and breathe upon my garden."

—SONG OF SOLOMON.

MARCH

VITA NUOVA!—New Life! It is Spring's first day by the almanac. We are standing on the very verge of Spring, and the world rings with the good news that the lovely season is approaching. In meadow-land the first daisies are out; the first buds are breaking and unfolding on the trees, glistening in the light. In the sunshine one notices the land growing greener day by day.

"Before the daisy grows a common flower,
Before the sun has power
To scorch the world up in his noontide hour,"

is the time when the unfolding beauties of Spring lay open their treasures, that the chief delights of the new life of Spring is felt.

Also it is when the evening shadows gather and we hear the birds' many songs in the twilight trees, we may know the time of year. The birds upon the tree, the lark in the sky sings the good news, the soft wind whispers the sweet message, the sunbeams write it on the lands—Vita Nuova! New Life!

"I wonder if the sap is stirring yet,
If wintry birds are dreaming of a mate,
If frozen snowdrops feel as yet the sun,
And crocus fires are kindling one by one . . .
I wonder if the Springtide of this year
Will bring another Spring both lost and dear;
If heart and spirit will find out their Spring,
Or if the world alone will bud and sing . . .
The sap will surely quicken soon or late,
The tardiest bird will twitter to a mate."

—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

The sap has risen, and every twig is swelling : even the hawthorn hedges some time since were green in places with expanded buds that the past warm weather had brought forth. The snowdrops, too, hang their heads, and kindled are the yellow fires of the crocus, for it is the first Spring day !

There comes to us, sent by Spring, one out of its store of beautiful days : it comes between days of bitter wintry winds, and is made up of hours of serene loveliness. It seems a day more venturesome than the rest, having strayed from the warm enfoldment of Spring. But recently such a day was ours to claim, holding all those characteristics which mark with beauty the year's youngest season : the changeful lights and sudden passing of the world from shine to shadow, the brief, beautiful showers that transform a golden land to one of silver. If you notice, the Springtime land in the sunshiny hours is golden, the trees seem a network of that shimmering precious metal ; but at shower-time the land seems hung with curtains of silver—the rain of Spring weaves always silvery draperies for the world, but not so the rain of summer, autumn or winter.

"Dawn in the garden, with the faintest sound,
Uncertain, tremulous, awaking birds."
—PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

MARCH

Earliest Spring displays her treasures,
Long in dead-leaf casket hid ;
Violets, first of flower treasures,
Are displayed 'neath opened lid.
Earth remembers not the cold ;
Violets are in the wold ;
What need she the white of snow,
When the blue of violets show ?
From your heart put snow away,
Greeting violets to-day !

One by one are birds returning,
One by one a flower blows,—
Earth a new joy each hour learning,
As cold March-time onward goes.
Taking up the glad refrain,
March winds chant it, and the rain
Of fair April sings a praise,
To the joy of violet days.
Seeming evermore to say,—
"Violets are born to-day !"

HOW well the blossoms and birds know the month !
They have no almanac to tell them the time of year ;
the birds have but the bursting buds ; the earliest flowers
the gentler rain and brighter skies to tell them it is March,
and the threshold of Spring. So surely true it is that ever,
year by year, never varying,

"Thro' wild March the throstle calls,"

and towards its calmer end

"The primrose peeps beneath the thorn."

Growing in greater clusters, they are as a golden fringe to the pink border of almond blossoms woven on the spreading blue of the sky. How fast the feathered choir increases!

The birds and flowers give to me just the same happiness that flower and bird gave to Emerson when he wrote of

“Broad orchards resonant with bees,”

that revealed to him the

“Lore of colour and sounds,
The innumerable tenements of beauty.”

"When the boughs of the garden are heavy with rain
The blackbird reneweth his song."

—WILLIAM MORRIS.

MARCH

IN the bright hours which come with March, the first
bird-melody is heard in the silvery notes of the thrush.

Sing me something well, sweet thrush,
Here where almonds wait to blush ;
At the melodies you sing,
Wakes the gladness of the Spring.

As your silver message floods
Flowerless meads and leafless woods,
Primrose stars uncloud and shine ;
Buds the fragrant eglantine !

Wind-flowers blossom at your call,
Blue skies greet your madrigal ;
Sing me something well and sweet,
This first morn of Spring to greet.

Tennyson sings of this time, when

" . . . A sweeter music wakes,
And thro' wild March the throistle calls."

" Rarely pipes the mounted thrush ;
Or underneath the barren bush
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March."

The bird of March holds a distinguished place in the long catalogue of our British birds. It contributes, perhaps, more than any other to the aggregate charms of the country. At its first mellow, sweet, and eloquent song come the blue skies again, "the skies oft washed with showers"; the clear blue seen between the showers, when the brightness is so

different from the blue of any other season. At its first notes the earliest primroses awaken; and it salutes the earliest of verdure found in the leaflets that adorn the lithe twigs of the woodbine. Its song is full of promise: it tells of emerald woods again, and the warm sunshine. Richard Jefferies has in one of his many Nature-papers, "Hours of Spring," a passage very beautifully describing this time of year: "It is sweet on waking in the early morn to listen to the small bird singing in the tree. No sound of voice or flute is like to the bird's song; there is something in it distinct and separate from all other notes. The bird upon the tree utters the meaning of the wind—a voice of the grass and the wildflower, words of the green leaf; they speak through that slender tone. Sweetness of dew and rifts of sunshine, the dark hawthorn touched with breadths of open bud, the odour of the air, the colour of the daffodil—all that is beloved of Springtime are expressed in his song." "‘New life, new love, new leafage,’"—it is stated in "Outside the Garden," "the throistle sings in the Spanish chestnut as the sun sets; and the lark wakes with the dawn, the Springtime bubbling in his throat."

"The garden with its many cares
All well repaid."

—COWPER.

MARCH

TO-DAY :—

The tender voice, the voice of Spring,
Across the world is whispering ;
They fall upon our ears to-day,
The accents of its tender lay.

The voice of Spring bids homeward fly
The birds that love our April sky ;
That love our fitful April hours,
By turn of sunshine and of showers.

The voice of Spring ! To you and me
It whispers May's tranquillity ;
Of flowers that gem a glorious scene,
The wood-floor's firmament of green.

THE hawthorn waits for a few days of warm, golden sunlight to show its new leaves. It is the first to verify the beauty of coming Spring, and the green of its leaves along the winding lanes first clothes the world in the Spring. The flowers of to-day that are first to flower at the voice of Spring—and the truest flowers of earliest Spring—are the violet and anemone, or Pasque-flower. The anemone has been long called the Holy-Week flower. The anemone or so-called Pasque-flower, or wind-flower, grew, it is said, with certain gorgeous Eastern blossoms, on the grassy hill of Calvary. It was the pale wood-anemone, and as it grew it was sprinkled with the sacred blood which spots the little leaves to this day. Not for this reason, however, but because of its triple leaves,

is it called Herb Trinity. The single red anemone is also said to have grown at the foot of the Cross, and to have received its brilliant scarlet from the like august dye. The piety of our ancestors named the anemone "Our Lady's Petticoats," and dedicated it to the Blessed Virgin. It was Pasque-flower because it blew about Easter-tide. The Pasque-flower is the purple anemone, and the purple of its leaves was used to dye Easter-eggs withal, as they use the gold of the broom in northern countries to this day. An old name for the wind-flower was flaw-flower, which means much the same thing. A flaw was a sudden blast of wind. In Scotland the peasant speaks of a sudden drift of light snow on the wind as "a flaw o' snaw."

The violet, too, is rich in folk-lore, and the delicate and fanciful allusions given to it by writers old and new are innumerable. Long ago, old Lyte, the herbalist, wrote: "There be two sortes of violets, the garden and the wilde violet. The garden violets are of a fayre, darke, or shining deepe blewe colour, and a very pleasant and amiable smelle. The wilde violets are without savour, and of a fainte blewe or pale colour. The sweete violet (as the Emperor Constantine wryteth) was called in Greeke, Ion, after the name of that sweete guirle or pleasant damosell, Io, whiche Jupiter turned into a trim heaffer or gallant cowe, because that his wife Juno (being both an angry and a jealousse goddess) should not suspect that he loved her. In the honour of whiche his Io, as also for her more delicate and holsome feeding, the earth, at the commandement of Jupiter, brought forth violettes."

And Gerard, the prince of herbalists, also waxes eloquent over the flower: "Very many of these violets receive orna-

ment and comely grace, for there be made of them garlandes for the heade, nosegayes and poesies which are delightfull and pleasant to smelle to, speaking nothing of their appropriate vertues; yea, gardens themselves receive by them the greatest ornament of all, chieftest beauty and most gallant grace; and the recreation of the minde which is taken heerby cannot but be verie good and honest for theys admonish and stir up a man to that which is comely and honest, for flowres, through their beautie, varieties of colour, and exquisite form do bring to a liberall and gentle minde the remembrance of honesty, comelinesse, and all kinds of vertues."

"Flowers only flourish rightly in the garden of some one who
loves them."

—RUSKIN (*Of Queen's Gardens*).

MARCH

It is the time when first flowers blow,—
Bells by March breezes shaken ;
When daffodils and jonquils glow,
And opal wind-flowers waken.

The crocus-vases overflow
With sunlight ever passing ;
The blue skies ever brighter glow,
In mere and river glassing.

Tho' birds with west returning dreams,
In southern lands still linger,
In leafless wood where sunlight gleams,
The thrush is March's singer.

"Darker than darkest pansies,
. . . More black than ash-buds in the front of March."

—TENNYSON.

WITH the flowering of the ash, towards the end of March, notice the swifter passing away of winter. Long before the leaves appear, the ash has blossomed. Its little tufts of flowers appear among the winged seeds of last year, and are very elegant in construction. They are very difficult to describe except in the technical language of the botanist; but those who will take the trouble to examine their beauty will be amply rewarded. Minute as they are, they are very lovely, and the rich purple contrasts beautifully with the delicate greenish-yellow tint of the flower stalks, though when the tree is observed from a distance, the latter are so closely concealed by the flowers as to be scarcely apparent. In its earlier stage of growth, the mass of unexpanded flowers is not unlike an irregularly granulated fruit, which eventually

becomes diffuse, and is finally succeeded by bunches of pendant seeds, not inappropriately called "keys." These "keys" or winged seeds were called by the ancients "*lingua avis*"—a bird's tongue—also another fancied resemblance in shape.

While considering briefly the ash, one's thoughts are naturally directed towards the beauty of winged seeds, of which England has many varieties. "The dandelion seed, which the wind has wafted through the open window, speaks to us of ways and means of securing the propagation of the flowers by the cunning utilisation of the winds—just as in other plants the waters may bear the seeds to distant parts, or as others, again, employ animals to carry their progeny and to spread their kind broadcast. When you stroll through the garden, or by the wayside, note how the herb-robert, by an ingenious catapult arrangement, plays at 'pitch and toss' with its seeds, and scatters them abroad and around. Watch the ripe poppy-head, full of seeds, and note the little doors which lie just under the lid. You may understand then, how, when the flower stalk sways to and fro with the wind, the seeds are ejected and thrown out from their parent capsule.

"Of winged seeds, too, there are many tolerably heavy kinds, which are dispersed by means of the wind acting on their parachutes. The sycamore seed has a double wing, as also has that of the maple; and the ash and fir are also to be reckoned with in this sense of wind-dispersed plants. When you stop to examine the burdock seed, you will then discover how the animal is pressed into the service of the plant, for you may note the hooked hairs with which the seeds are provided, and wherewith they cleave and cling to the hair and fur of sheep and other unsuspecting ministers of plant-life. Nor is the service of the animal always unconscious."

"The daughters of the year,
One after one, through that still garden pass,
Each garlanded with her peculiar flower."

—TENNYSON.

MARCH

HIGH above the budding poplars, the lark soars happy in its singing: we watch it until it is lost in the mist of the blue of the sky, our sight almost dazzled with the brightness of the sunlight! We have closed up the book of the "sere and yellow leaf," with its record of rain-filled and cheerless days and many mist-clothed hours, and now we turn once more to the beautiful book of Spring, with its floral printed and delicately worded pages. We all own its beauty, its tales of love and laughter, its stories of sunshine, birds, and flowers, its pictures of blue skies and fleecy clouds. As yet we are but conning the preface, and the story which it tells to us afresh year by year, is oh! so old, and simple withal, with its never-changing voices of songsters, and music of streams and wind melodies; the dancing meadow shadows among the swaying boughs and sighing leaves and a thousand other "common sweet delights."

Fair are the budding branches of the hedgerows, where the hawthorn and blackthorn are touched with a million pink leaf buds; here and there they have burst their coral bonds, out of which have been fledged a tuft of palest foliage, making patches of tenderest green among the bare stems. Below, amid the lingering leaves of last year, the celandine has spread its clustering glossy heart-shaped leaves around its first bright flowers, bringing

"News of Winter's vanishing."

The *Arum maculatum* is also quickly unfurling its purple-

dappled leaves, sending them up from the brown earth like to exquisitely carved cups of jade! The ribbed leaves of the plantain pierce the wintry slime beside the river, which stately plant by its earliest coming foretells the many beautiful children of Flora that will follow in its train and be its companions—the yellow iris, arrow-heads, and flowering rush, to mention but a few.

How grateful we are for the mild breeze after the keen wind of a few days since. As it blows around us what happy news it bears to the eager listener—the note of the cuckoo calling clearly through the April days, the nightingale making the May midnight melodious with its song. It is but an anticipatory possession of what will soon be realised.

**"I sometimes think . . . that every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head."**

—OMAR KHAYYAM.

APRIL

Shade and shine of changing light,
Wakes a bud and blossom bright ;
Smiles amid the hawthorn grey,
Tender leaves of green to-day.
April-tide, the earliest Spring,
Bids each bird awake and sing :
"Spring is here ! Joy is near !
April wakes the glad young year !"

Smile and tear on April's face,
Lends to her a winsome grace,
When the trumpet daffodil,
With a herald-music fill,
Daisyng meadows, emerald wood,
With a joyous song of good :
"Spring is here ! Joy is near !
April wakes the glad young year !"

**" A garden is a place where one may foster a passion for loveliness,
may learn the magic of colour and the glory of form."**

—ANONYMOUS.

"Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beautiful flowers."

—WALT WHITMAN.

APRIL

Sing, April's poet, lark, thou gladsome bird !
Mount high with sweetest praise on trembling wing ;
Through dewy sunbeams thy Spring-song is heard,
Sing !

Thy canticle of praise, thy hymn to Spring,
Falls light to earth each brief staccatoed word,
Soft as rain-music when the white clouds fling

A whiter rain, and all life, long deferred,
Rises in joy, the days remembering,
When birds from bright of dawn till twilight blurred,
Sing !

OVER the grey of the orchard a white has suddenly appeared, as if by magic, and upon the topmost branches from afar is seen a faint suggestion of green. On this fair April morning, with a shower passed, the orchard lies, as one awakened from youthful slumber, in a bed of blue breath of the sky behind, awakened with an exquisite *matinata* from the birds. In the orchard-grass the daffodils are lamping yellower blooms, having reached a brighter hue than they owned in the bleak March weather, when they shone out as beacons to light the cold dark days to a month of brighter hours.

What is that lying upon the lawn's emerald—snow, or fallen wild-dove's feathers? Neither; it is the scattered blossoms of the white crocus. And how much more beautiful they appear when coming up suddenly and promiscuously;

planted together, or in even rows in garden-beds of brown earth, their pure charm is lost ; they want the new green of the grass for their sun-opened petals' displaying.

Crowded with thoughts and suggestions of new life is every hour of Spring's birthday, from early morn till dusk, when the orchard's white blossoms are hushed to rest, gossamered with filmy mist, and the last bird having finished its *serata*, that in its singing tells the land of the near time when the hedges are emerald frescoes, whereon are carved as in ivory the fair white stars of the flowers o' the May.

"The true pleasure of a garden."

—BACON.

APRIL

"PURE colour is rest of heart," says Richard Jefferies ; and surely that rest is to be found at the present moment. Were the hedges ever more green or of such purity ? or the blossoms—those such as are now found in bloom—more chaste ? Spring comes to our Western gardens with all her winsome trickeries of grace, and with liberal hand scatters the simplest of blossoms, in colours never gaudy, in pattern never intricate ; she brings with her the sweet new light that is never wearisome—as sometimes in the depth of Summer—and shadows never unlovely. For the green of foliage—the new, half-fledged leaf, generously moulded, and bud beautifully formed—is always a joy against the grey of sky ; and the morning brilliancy, the chequered noon, the night irradiations, are backgrounds of beauty to the April garden.

Now is the first chord of colour struck, silenced since Autumn stood in his coat of golden mail. A tender note is sounded in the bush of the American currant, hung all over with tassels of warm pink ; next to it stands a dark-green box-tree, flecked everywhere with a lighter hue. The laurestine has opened to fulness its corymbs of creamy flowers, seeming to be satisfied at last, after having waited for so long. These and countless other blossoms—the tulips, oxlips, and polyanthus—tell us that Spring has come to our gardens of the West. But a deeper, truer note is struck amid the border blossoms, where a shaft of sunlight catches the rain-wet wall-

flowers. In the garden is a truly royal blossom of Spring, the crown imperial, always an object for admiration. And what could one say in praise of the sky above the garden, or the chance birds, and birds familiar to it ; of the air full of stars—white and coral-pink stars that are blown petals which the wind brings in drifts, as though to let one know that Spring is at play amid the branches !

"Every flower and bird has a story of its own in the garden, only
it varies with the mood of the owners."

—HELEN MILMAN.

APRIL

THE beautiful days of waking Spring are unfolding. In
glade and hollows the daffodils are nodding in the still,
cold breeze, and in the height of their loveliness golden stars
of the celandine and coltsfoot are twinkling on many an
emerald bank. Life is indeed at this season

"Lovely to live, and life a sunlit stream
For ever flowing to a changeless peace."

How enjoyable it is, now that the days are growing longer,
to walk in the warmer sunlight through field and woodland,
to breathe the air fragrant with the scent of violets, sweet
with the breath of primroses, musical with the voice of birds!
The pink of the almond blossoms has faded; the first bright
bloom to appear telling us we were on the threshold of
spring. Soon we shall hear echoing through the forest
sanctuaries the twin note of the cuckoo, the cooing of the
woodland doves in the graceful larches: perfect harmonies in
Nature's temple! The flowers of Spring—the violet, the
pearly wood-sorrel, the wind-flower, the primrose—whisper
to us of contentment, hope, and faith. Hope and faith, by
waiting through the long cold days of winter under the fallen
leaves until the voice of Spring should call them from sleep;
contentment we might learn from the modest violet, the
most fragrant of all our English flowers, yet contented to
hide away, and thankful for its lowly sphere.

If we would take to heart one or two lessons the Spring

flowers suggest, and banish from our heart's garden the great fruitless aloes of lofty pride, the sunflowers of self-love, and all the flaunting blooms which bear but the seed of discontent, and plant in their stead the primroses of a quiet mind, the violets of contentment, the anemones of peace!

O fair, meet time of all the year,
The rarest time—the days now here ;
When wind-flowers frail awake and blow,
Whose cradle cover was the snow.

Each lawn grows fair with daisies pied ;
In every nook the violets hide ;
Along each path where Spring is led,
Nature with stars has broidered.

Then marvel not why larks sing sweet—
So madly sweet near heav'n—they greet,
As should your heart and mine to-day,
When meeting Spring along the way.

"Woods netted in a silver mist, and cottage gardens smelling
everywhere."

—MRS. BROWNING.

APRIL

BUOYANTLY the sun, peeping through the eastern curtains, sheds his glory over the world. The mist lingers upon the air, and by the keenness of the dawn-breeze we know that King Frost has been abroad overnight. The new grass is weighed down with its heavy burden of dew, which, sparkling in the light of the eastern rays, makes a million miniature suns. Soon the mist steals away through the musical branches, hastening to its home by way of the sunbeam pathway. As we walk in the dawntide at the commencement of this sweet symphonious season, and pass by gardens lit with the year's primal blossoms, hearing all things whisper, "This is Spring!" is to live indeed and to be thankful for life; to feel the presence of hope in our hearts as in the world's, with all the promise of its ordered seasons of fruit and flowers before it, and to wonder withal what the year will for us unfold. When the mist has departed, the cottage roofs gleam and shimmer as they nestle amid the shadowless trees, whose branches are just giving out their first faint green. Busy sparrows dart to and fro from beneath the eaves with their household furniture—a feather, a long straggling straw, and the flotsam and jetsam of the country road. Presently, human life is astir, and to match the music of the birds, the new flowers, the warm sunlight, making one sweet harmony, is the sound of youthful voices ringing fresh and clear as they troop to the meadows to gather the violets—lives in the morning of life and in the spring of existence. When we see the little ones with their hands full of quickly-fading

flowers, and hear them laughing in the new-born sunlight, with what force comes the beauty of that peerless passage spoken by the Preacher of the "days of youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. While the sun, or the light . . . be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain." Our own youth returns when we look into your bright eyes and listen to your golden laughter, oh sweet, happy, innocent little ones!

.

A low musical murmur comes from the insects, as they flit like specks of gold in the noontide light among the brown tangle of orchard branches, where one or two of the more venturesome of the trees have arrayed themselves with the white raiment of the blossoms. The tip of every twig on the chestnuts glitters with a glazed bronze-coloured leaf-bud, in which is snugly lying the downy leaves—the perfectly-formed spike of the blossom to be, the bursting buds looking like so many half-opened eyes, sleepy yet with the dreams of winter, looking upon the spring-dawn world, awakened by the bird-music. Hyacinths in the garden perfume the air, some uplifting their white spikes of flesh-like blooms, some of spotless pink-like bells of carved coral.

Quickly glides the sun towards the west; each moment of the day that his rays have kissed the earth has been the birthday to a million leaves and flowers. Ere the sun has set night approaches with her chilly footsteps. The grey wood-guests softly coo as they prepare for rest, and other birds sing far into the dark amid the orchard branches, while not far distant the rooks in their high home grow garrulous and extremely noisy over their good-night gossip.

"The Spring arose on the garden fair
And the spirit of Love fell everywhere."

—SHELLEY.

APRIL

IT is

"The Spring and playtime of the year,"

of which Cowper sang; the very earliest hours of Spring are with us, the time which that old Court poet, Thomas Carew, set to rhyme:

"Now that the Winter's gone, the earth has lost
Her snow-white robes; and now no more the frost
Candies the grass, or casts an icy cream
Upon the silver lake or crystal stream:

.

The valleys, hills, and woods in rich array,
Welcome the coming of the longed-for May."

The secret of the sweetness of April lies principally in its showers and flowers, and the charm of its days, because they are so full of changeful moments, varying from dazzling sunlight to dark and sudden shadows. And it is when the ominous black clouds suddenly spring up from the horizon that the orchard-blossoms are seen at their best, and then from a distance, much of their beauty being lost in the strong light. The chestnuts are among the first of the trees to know of the "playtime of the year," and to shake off the Winter's restraint. In early March each twig of the tree was sticky with golden cement, but in the first warm April shower the scales fell down in a flutter of delight, and, as if by magic, a little tuft of downy leaflets were born, in whose heart is carefully hidden the young flower, delicately perfect

in form, and which in a very short time is to light the foliage as with hundreds of silver tapers.

April, too, is memory's month. Who is there, in looking back down the long vista of vanished years, does not remember this month? Who cares to remember the dead years by the golden leaves of Autumn? Not one of us. Or to take one back to the past: who recalls the days of Winter? Few, if any. It was the rain and the green robe of Spring that first impressed the beauty of seasons upon us, the picture that has stayed with us, and is now greeting us once again.

"All seasons and their change, all please alike :
Sweet is the breath of morn, her visions sweet
With charm of earliest birds."

—MILTON.

APRIL

THE April thrush is one of the charms of Spring :—

A merry muse, the blithe Spring bird,
How well he pipes if he but choose,
How rounded, polished, is each word ;
A merry muse !

Spring's missal he doth well peruse,—
Let Summer yet be long deferred,
June haste not her sweets to diffuse.

When summer comes, no more he's heard ;
He then his silvery flute must lose,
Whose piping made this blithe Spring bird
A merry muse.

The charm of birds is felt and acknowledged by most of us. All the year round, our feathered friends give us many pleasures, and surely most of all at the present time, when Spring brings back many an immigrant to grove and glen, where blue-bells are nodding, to meads yellow with cowslips, and to hawthorn hedgerows now fast preparing to put forth its scented silver to shelter the home of the nightingale. The cuckoo, heard and seen a week ago—"half of Spring's gladness is in his twin note"—tells of the near approach of the time that brings

"The swallow back from o'er the sea."

The greater charm is with the *earliest* birds, when in the first days of Spring, at dawn, as soon as Aurora has succeeded

in finally chasing away the lingering night, many sweet answering notes are poured from budding boughs, staying throughout the long bright day, only ending when the twilight has deepened. Before long, the day-birds' finished strains will be taken up by the nightingale, making day and night one unbroken round of melody.

Do they not sing in pure thankfulness for the enjoyment of life? At all times of the year in this direction, with their feeble twitterings or perfectly executed songs, they are wont to charm us; the thrush, the hedge-sparrow, and the wren sing more or less every month; the yellow-hammer sings as long as summer lasts; and the robin, everybody's friend, silent all through the time of roses, sings when autumn mists are abroad, and winter were hardly winter were he absent, his bright breast gleaming like a crimson rose among the lily-lustre of the snow.

Is anything more marvellous than their songs coming untaught and unwritten from their throats, songs that are never forgotten, handed down from brood to brood, never less in beauty of rhythm, each new fledgeling bringing its certain *repertoire* with it, when it emerges from its speckled shell, and whose song is to help swell the grand chorus which goes towards making the seasons so enjoyable, each fragile note on blossoming bough, each lark rising jubilant skyward, each jolly chaffinch in bush and brake, each warbler of reed and rail, making one harmonious chord.

Who, again, can help admiring the construction of their homes, each built in its ordained place, the swallow's above the lattice beneath the sheltering eaves, the robin's in the ivied bank, the wren's in the low bush, the rook's situated

on the topmost twigs of the high trees. The majority of the birds' edifices are marvels of beauty and form in construction, the materials for which are collected and arranged with such care and skill, and with no other tools but a beak and two claws. In winter the charm of birds is not single; in the great city few sights are prettier than to watch the seagulls—that only of late years asked for our friendship—haunting the Thames banks and bridges; and indeed many of us have found pleasure in this winged invasion. It is in summer-time, perhaps—in Nature's own solitudes—that the birds bestow the greatest charm, where, for instance, in that spot where the kingfisher darts up and down some quiet brook, flashing like a jewel in a fairy palace, whose walls are hung with purple arras of the loosestrife-spears, studded at the base with the golden moneywort; or, again, in the marshlands, where to swish of scythe rise a thousand voices of sedge warbler, reed warbler, crested grebe, bearded tits and buntings. To the fen inhabitant, the clanging of the wild geese, the wrangling of teal, the curlew's pipe, and lapwing's plaint are part and parcel of Nature. Thoreau says: "We can never have enough of Nature;" and how true is it in this direction, and at this season, when the birds are returning, and the whole face of Nature is smiling!

"In this shrill hush of quietude . . .
From hazels of the garden came
A prelude of the passion-charm."

—GEORGE MEREDITH.

APRIL

Love's morn is here, and April's vernal days
Grow day by day more golden, skies more clear ;
For flowers, the year has laid aside her bays,—
Love's morn is here !

Within my heart fair visions now appear ;
The glad light melts earth's bare and silent ways,
Bids her for garments songs and blossoms wear.

To Heav'n the lark ascends with voice of praise ;
Turned into joyfulness each wintry tear
Of rippling stream that trills a thousand lays.
Love's morn is here !

WE may behold the flowery footsteps of Spring to-day in the garden ; the heart of the golden air seems beating with ecstasy ; the birds seem to say, o'er and o'er, that on earth is "Life again ! Leaf again !" Browning, in his "Home-thoughts from Abroad," never tuned his lyre to sweeter words than when he sang :—

"Oh ! to be in England,
Now that April's there :
And whoever wakes in England,
Sees some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf ;
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough,
In England—now !

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !
Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover

Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture ! ”

Very slowly the leaves are opening on the branches of hedge and tree, but we know that Spring is with us once again, and even the first blossoms which she brought with her are all but faded—the Daphne and the coltsfoot among them. The flowers of our woods grow day by day more and more beautiful under April's azure skies, swept at times by white clouds that pass with their wonderful forms of line and curve, and that

“ Take the shape
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape.”

Yet surely, if slowly, the silvery greyness of the woods is growing greener with unfolding bud and leaf. So when April comes, with its hours of unfolding leaves, well spent were any hour with Nature in reading a chapter of her leaflore, where she would tell you how “the green leaf is the source of all the rivers and streams in the world. That it is by the agency of the leaf that water circulates as the life-blood of the globe. In a leafless world there would be no rains and no streams.” The wonders of the green leaf are inexhaustible. “All the parts of a plant are but modifications of the leaf. The stem is a leaf rolled up tight; the blossom is a leaf transfigured for a higher purpose; the fruit is a leaf turned into a receptacle for the seed. All organisms, whether animal or vegetable, are similar in their elementary structure and form; and the most complicated results are obtained by the simplest conceivable means, and that without the slightest violations of the original plan of Nature. The palm of

the human hand and the backbone of the human form are both constructed upon the model of the leaf, and Thoreau has said that the whole earth is but a gigantic leaf, in which the rivers and streams resemble the veins, and the mountains and the plains the green parts."

"A garden must not be too large ; you must feel yourself enclosed in it."

—ALPHONSE KARR.

APRIL

'Tis violet-tide, hidden in wood and thicket,
Scenting the ambient air, from sight they hide,
Spring's sapphire gems, e'en one, deign not to pick it,—
'Tis violet-tide !

Draw not from them their emerald veil aside
Of sun-wooded leaflets by the garden wicket,
Where to and fro nest-seeking songsters glide.

Brief, sweet the time of violets, quick it
Departs, and soon its joys subside ;
Come out, while yet in glade and woodland thicket,
'Tis violet-tide !

"A GARDEN," says Sadi, the Persian poet, "is a delight to the eye and a solace to the soul ; it soothes angry passions, and produces that pleasure which is a foretaste of paradise." He whose mind is in keeping with this saying must welcome the year's first returning season, and own the beauty of "braw Spring." The very earliest garden blossoms, hellebore and aconite among them, have gone, and on the verge of fading are the daffodils ; at their adieu does not Herrick's lament come to our minds, and is not his sorrow ours also :—

"Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste so soon away."

The pink jewels of the almond blossoms in their brown-bough setting must also, alas ! too soon lose their lustre. The purple shoots rise from the ground higher every day, marking the winter bed of the pæonies, and by their side the bright green

of the phlox makes a pleasing contrast. Each may now bestow an individual appreciation upon the garden's blossoms, and think longer upon their charms before May has brought its floral wealth, or June has overburdened the world with its magnitude of colour. One might enumerate a long list of "braw Spring's" floral charms, not forgetting the laurustinus, which seemed ready to open its corymbs of red buds to herald Christmas, but have long delayed the unfolding of them till now; neither is there a lovelier sight than the long lines of pear and plum trees, whose petal-snow is now falling in the musical rain, and lies scattered on the ridges of the brown furrows.

"Braw Spring" in the woods and fields! when first

"Daisies, vermil-rimmed and white,
Hide in deep herbage, and ere yet the bees
Hum about globes of clover!"

Who can find words to express the beauties when the celandine embroiders the grass, and anemones peep like a glimmering pearl from among the dead bracken, and the pale purple ladies' smocks are trembling on "the river's lip" and in moist meadows? The first perfumes are flung upon the air; the scent of the sweet-briar steals down the lane, the dog's-mercury waving upon the floor of the shady wood sends abroad its almond odour; unseen, many a thousand violets empty their store of incense, wafted from dell, or some sequestered spot where for companion opens many

"A primrose by the river's brim."

Spring supplies food to all the senses; there are blue skies, silvery rain, new green leaves and golden blossoms for our sight; clear melodies to delight the ear; sweet perfume of

flower and leaf, the smell of cleansing showers, and gentle breezes blowing with lightest touch for our other senses. Some there are who have endeavoured to write the lore of perfumes, and would tell us that the odour of wild thyme renews the spirits; the scent of sweet-briar promotes cheerfulness; cowslips, wallflowers, plum-blossom bestows refreshment; and that the fragrance of limes produces dreams. Even Ralph Austin said in his delightful book (1657), "Health is preserved by pleasant and wholesome odours, and perfumes found in the garden of fruit-trees . . . are not simply healthfull, but are accompted cordiall, chearing and refreshing the heart and vitall spirits."

"Probably there is no feeling in the human mind stronger than the love of gardening, and at all times and in all places gardens have been amongst the objects of the greatest interest to mankind."

—CHARLES DICKENS.

APRIL

FROM my window, across the garden, I have looked each morn of late upon a stretch of orchard lands, noticing with delight how each new dawn brings to me a scene lovelier, snowier with blossom than yesterday. It is among these pure fragrant blossoms

"The rapturous resurrection of the year
Finds the radiant utterance perfect, sees the word
Spoken, hears the light that speaks it."

It is along these orchard ways I see the promise of Spring fulfilled as I breathe the fruit-blossom perfumed air, the promise of an abundant ingathering of luscious fruit at autumn-tide.

How new the world seems after its frost-pent and foggy days of winter, coupled with the joys that seem to be born only at resurrection-tide. The cerise catkins of the quivering aspens are falling upon the woodland paths, proving that in the near future we shall enjoy the shade of their glossy leaves, quivering and sighing even in the stillest day of summer. Although there be such a wealth of blossom, and the promise be so prolific, we cannot be certain that it will be fulfilled; for, alas! there are the May frosts to fear. If the quaint old-world sayings be true, we may expect the fulfilment of this Spring's promise:

A bushel of March dust is a thing
That's worth the ransom of a king.

A cold April
The barn will fill.

In the woods we may hear the new notes of the birds; and although tuneful, they are as yet imperfect. They are singing for very joy, because sunny days are dawning, because of the newness of life. Later on we shall hear their perfect songs. Many a rapturous note they will pour into our ear when the training of their voices shall have been completed; having finished their course of lessons from the One Great Maestro, they will be commissioned by Him to take their several parts on the great operatic stage of Nature. And for all of us these bird operas are played in thicket and copse and plantation. They open day after day with the grand dawn-chorus; we may listen enchanted to their duets, trios, and quartettes, enacted until the interval at the hush of noon; we may listen enraptured to the song of the principal soloist at eve, that bird of birds, the nightingale, with

“The mellow lute upon her lips.”

But the most beautiful promise of all is for the little ones around us; and how fair an one it is! how white, how pure, how fragrant are the blossoms upon their life's tree: fragrant with the happy and innocent friendships, their days are golden with the sun of

“Love, which is the sunlight of peace.”

What will they be? and what does their Spring-time promise? There are the May frosts of youth's follies to pass through, and all must pass through the ordeal. May they pass through it strengthened and purified by the frost of trial, with their blossoms of promise unblighted, happy lad and laughing lass!

"Gardens interspersed with flowering beds,
That catch the scent of blooming groves."
—COWPER.

APRIL

The wood's trees drip with April rain
That o'er the land has lately passed ;
Winter's last hungry wolf is slain,—
Has ceased to wail and howl at last.

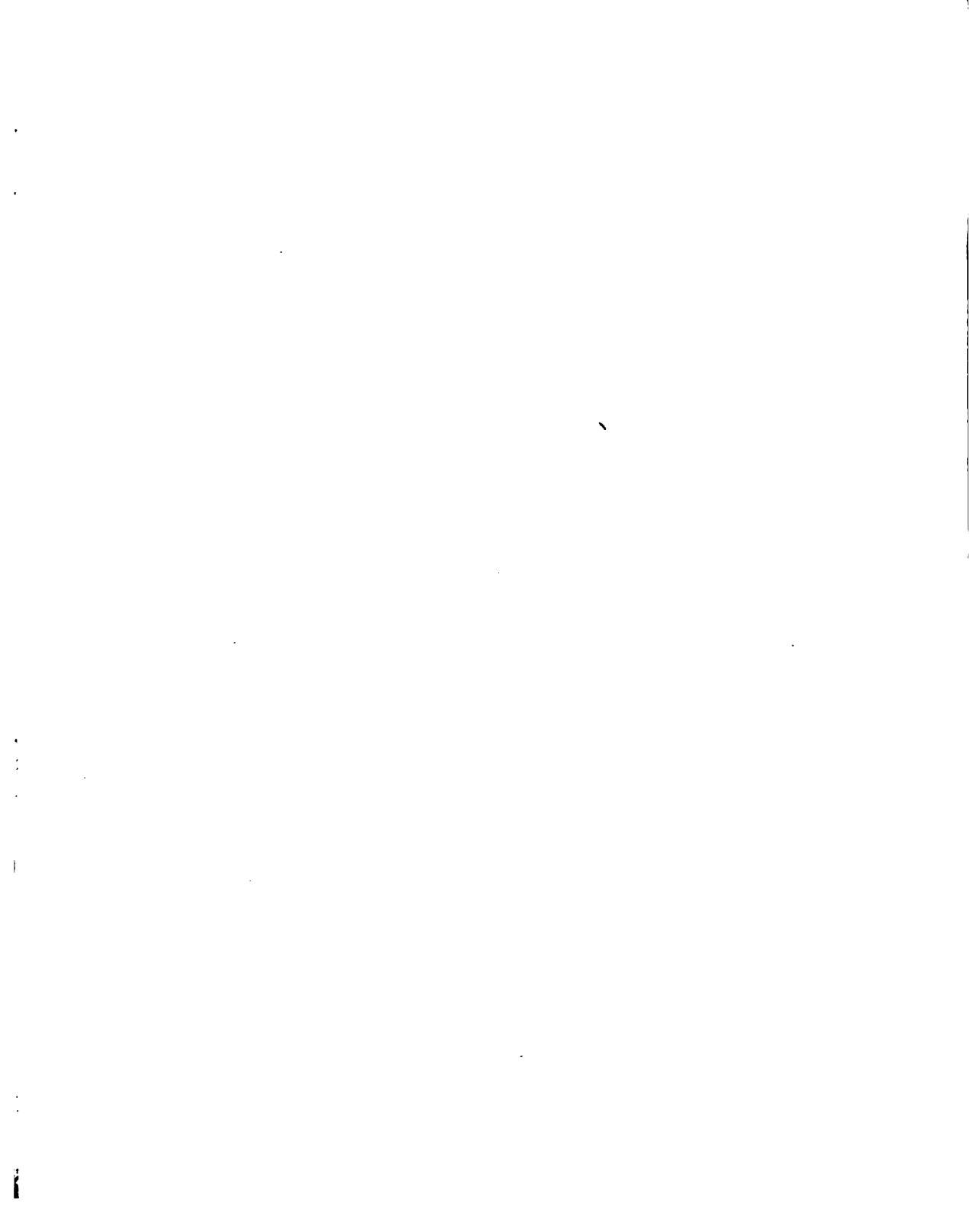
The branches now the sun glints through,
The rain-jewels in a cascade fall
Like golden globes of giant dew,
And through the moist air cuckoos call.

TO-DAY, many fantastic pictures are woven for me as I
look across a stretch of pasture-lands, woods and corn-
green acres, shimmering beneath a blue sky like one great
emerald, the colour relieved only by the crows that are pacing
the furrows, appearing

"As jewels of jet
In emerald set."

How blue the sky of April always is! Like a limitless sea
it gleams above us, that, rippling earthward, breaks upon tree
and hedge and garden in foam of blossoms. The serene air
is full of song and fragrance, and as I breathe the scented
zephyr and listen to joyful bird-melodies I remember a pretty
flower-fancy that I had somewhere read: "The perfume of
flowers is the breath of God. When first He created the
flowers, He thought with what special gift should He endow
them. Looking upon the birds He said, 'Behold I have
given to them the power of flight and the charm of song,'
and breathing upon the flowers, He whispered, 'Be ye filled

THE MEADOWLAND.



with a pure fragrance, that whenever men breathe your air-distilled odours he may seek to be pure as ye.' ”

The great crowded cities, too, are full of fancies. For several days past a wild wood-pigeon has been building its nest behind one of the columns of a London church. Seeing it busy in its toil of love, I thought of some busy worker in a tiny room in sight of the lofty spire—some outcast, perhaps, who has been longing and praying for a message from the old home in the heart of England; I could see the joy that would be born in her weary eyes at the sight of the bird, and the message of peace it would speak to her. I pictured the visions it would recall—of a homestead hid in honeysuckle and clematis, the garden bright with lilies and roses, and at the end of it the wood, purple with waving foxgloves amid the dewy bracken.

"Gardens full of flowers
Dew'd with such distilling showers."
—SHAKESPEARE.

APRIL

All fresh from sleep the flowers of Spring are waking,
The primrose-stars and violet-eyes in meadow peep.
The white flower foam on hedge will soon be breaking,
All fresh from sleep.

Homeward each homesick bird hastes Spring to keep,
Fast westward their God-guided tracks are making,
To dew-wet woodlands with green grasses deep ;

Bright tropic skies, and lotus-streams forsaking,
To woo sweet English April that doth laugh and weep :
Birds,—friends of flowers that now new shape are taking,
All fresh from sleep.

"Rosy plumelets tuft the larch."
—TENNYSON.

THE larch (*Larix Europæa*), a well-known tree in most of our woodlands here, is fast hanging on its branches—for boughs it has none—those delicately-formed pink tassels of its blossoms side by side to the dark brown cones of last and former years. The tender green of its feathery foliage, which appears soon after the pink "plumelets," is seen to perfection when sparkling with the silver of an April shower ; and is there anything more beautiful than an April shower ? All in a moment the bright gold quits the land, and hands invisible hang the blue dome of heaven with white cloud-garlands, fairy-like and fantastically woven. Then it seems as though these skyland flowers are shaken, and from them falls countless strips of silver on to the emerald land ; when again, all in a moment, as quickly as they were looped from

horizon to horizon, they are borne thither over sea, over mountain, to shake their silver upon the flowers and trees of other lands !

“Listen to the garden talking while it rains,”

bids the poet, singing of an April shower ; and one may now behold the activity which these gentle showers call forth to those who take delight in the “true pleasure of a garden.” A few from the many garden-thoughts, culled from past and present literature, I append below, whose recordance, perchance, will give as great a pleasure to the reader as they gave to their several writers :—

“Who will follow the calling of Adam worthily shall begin by loving flowers as a scholar loves books : not for glory of having a great collection, still less for an unintelligent and semi-commercial pride in what is rare and expensive ; but for themselves, their fragrance, their beauty, their foliage, or for the many curious reproductive and other gifts given them by Nature.”—P. ANDERSON GRAHAM.

“The principal value of a private garden is not understood. It is not to give the possessor vegetables and fruit, but to teach him patience and philosophy, and the higher virtues—hope deferred and expectations blighted, leading to resignation and sometimes to attenuation. The garden thus becomes a moral agent, a test of character, as it was in the beginning.”—CHAS. D. WARNER.

“So long as a garden is only regarded as a means for displaying masses of gay colouring, half the delight and all the real interest of it are gone. It is only when we learn to make

friends of individual plants, and recall their history and associations, that a garden becomes a pleasure for the intellect as well as for the senses."—HENRY A. BRIGHT.

"Here are pictures passing Art,
And wealth more precious than gold,
A balm for the weary heart,
And charms that can ne'er grow old.

Of all the crafts that men pursue,
In wealth or honour's quest,
The gardener's, if we judge it true,
Ranks ever first and best.

The gardener's craft I therefore praise,
Rich blessings from him spring,
He holds the key to Nature's ways,
And is of men a king."

—R. L. STEVENSON.

GARDEN EXCELLENCES.

"Many for many virtues excellent ;
None but for some, and yet all different,
Oh, mickle is the powerful grace that lies
In herbs, plants, stones and their true qualities,
For nought so vile that in the earth doth live,
The earth some special good doth give."

—SHAKESPEARE.

"'Neath the first of the sunrise . . . a garden I found me ;
And fulfilled of great pleasure I was as I entered
The fair place of flowers."

—WILLIAM MORRIS.

M A Y

For light and song, for leaves and flowers,
The sunshine's ever glorious hours,
Spring sings to heaven a song of praise,
In all her countless lovely ways.
A choir of birds on budding bough,
Where leaves are lisping praises now ;
A laugh where waters wind along,—
Spring's sweet thanksgiving, May's dear song !

In Spring and May, hearts should be glad ;
Who in this month of months is sad,
When days are told in golden hours,
As vanishes the month of flowers ?
Come, lend your heart to swell the praise ;
Your eyes to traverse beauty's ways ;
Your lips,—chant they but one refrain,
So you join Spring's thanksgiving strain !

**"If we did not care for gardens, I hardly know what in the way
of beauty we should care for."**

—SIR ARTHUR HELPS.

"Collecting I traverse the garden . . . for tokens . . . Here
lilac with a branch of pine . . .
Here some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage."
—WALT WHITMAN.

MAY

IT is interesting to observe how differently writers have described the green tint of the trees. Tennyson sings of

"Branches fledged with clearest green,
New from its silken sheath."

One striking and uncommon thought is that of Walt Whitman's, where he speaks of

" . . . A live oak growing,
Without any companion it grew there, uttering
Joyous leaves of dark green."

How exactly suited, when one considers, is this application of *uttering*—not shaking, or waving—and perhaps the poet had unconsciously in his mind at the time Shakespeare's "tongues in trees." In this direction we might class the "uncomplaining trees," and

"A murmur in the trees,
. . . Everywhere a voice of prophecy,"

which is to be found in Kipling's two sonnets. Or take the line in Rossetti's "English May," when

"Hedgerows pine from green to grey"

as the year advances, and which, on noticing, is quite true. Whittier sings of "sombreing pines," and again of

"The bay
Green-belted with eternal pines."

These instances are but a few of the many varying expressions given to the leaves, ranging from the simple "gay green" of Thomson, to Swinburne's marvellous vision of green, "the colour of the glad grass" seen

"When April's kissing May,
O fervent eyelids, letting through
Those eyes the greenest of things blue,
The bluest of things grey."



"The world like one great garden show'd,
And thro' the wreaths of floating dark upcurl'd
Rare sunrise flow'd."

—TENNYSON.

MAY

OF the time

"When sparrows build, and the leaves break forth,"

Jean Ingelow sings in one of her passionate lyrics, meaning the time of May, the days that now are with us, when the world is fair in its first fresh leafy loveliness. The most beautiful time of the year seems to burst suddenly upon us. After a day of continuous showers, followed by a night of cold, star-hiding mist, we wake to find the hedges greener, and more leafy the trees; clearer the landscape stretches before our eyes, closer the daisies crowd together in the spears of the grass, which other flowers, including the blue bugle, also enamel. In the lane the yellow archangel has shown flower, amid other members of the same family (*Labiata*), namely, the red and white dead nettle and ground ivy. The new crisp leaves of the blush sorrel, gipsywort, and willow-herb fringing the merrily-pacing brook in the meadow send out a refreshing odour. Along the stream-side what dainty pictures are formed, where the cattle are straying in the blue shadows, as they feed upon the luxurious herbage the well-watered banks bestow! We may trace their measured wandering in the morning by the dints of their feet amid clover-leaves, white with the bloom of the dew. The leaves of the limes along the avenue shine with a beautiful soft gloss, the foliage dappled with the red scales of the leaf-buds yet unshed. But this is suburban May. It comes to the city in this wise:

Some one day, long waited and hoped for, the mists clear, and all the drab dinginess seems banished, when from the clear arch of the sky the sun in all its glory breaks forth, flooding street and square and court. The blackness which the winter fogs brought seems to have all been washed away; the roofs gleam, and façades are wreathed with amber light; every corner of street is transformed into a garden with the flower-sellers' wares, while overhead the sparrows build. This "brown bird" is as much a bird of the city as it is of the country. This to-day of May I have watched them from a city window busy in building amid surroundings as unlovely as could anywhere be found; twittering, enjoying the sunlight that had found its way to their scene of labour, heedless were they of the swooping smoke that a gust of wind occasionally brought from some neighbouring chimney. One could easily espy their homes by the long pieces of string and packing straw, of bright-coloured dyes, hanging from the eaves, which principally composed their nests. Why should the sparrows prefer these dingy spots when for a brief wing-journey the pleasant country might be theirs, gardens blushing with the blooms of May, orchards rosy with newly-opened apple-blossom, and wherein they could catch the first butterflies?

Of late years we have heard a great deal about the sparrow. Some have spoken of it as a friend, some as a pest. One farmer pleads for it as follows: "Of all our British birds the sparrow is the most useful, to the farmer especially. These birds are the greatest destroyers and the best fly-catchers we have, for the simple reason that they are always with us. Volumes might be written of their good deeds, and all their bad deeds summed up in a very few words. . . . I weigh the

good the thousands of these little birds are doing me by eating the seeds of harmful weeds in my stubborn fields against the corn they have eaten; the balance quickly turns in their favour." Would that this kindly plea were also that of many; and as the nightingale is loved because of its "lyre of gold," the thrush and blackbird for their songs that ring through "the greenest growth of Maytime," may this bird in shabby brown be tolerated for the usefulness, known and unknown, it affords to man.

The sweetness of the noontide rain! It is falling and falling, its silvery threads shot with gold, enmeshing the white and coral blossom. The sky is strangely dark with lachrymal clouds, and how pleasant is the tuneful fall of the Spring shower; listen to it falling on the river's breast in a soft tinkle; but a sweeter note is struck as it lisps its song on the new-born leaves. But the rain will be brief; for hark! a lark is singing above the twinkling crests of the trees that a first sunbeam has caught—sure token of near bright hours! How fair the world lies, lovelier for the passed shower! The tulips have become a most fair lachrymary, and the sunlight, flitting through interlaced boughs, dapple paths with the most fanciful of shadow mosaics—paths that in summer are cool with a daytime twilight. In many a garden forget-me-nots as with a blue mist envelop the cardinal and pure white tulips as they rise from out "the lover's flower," above which the laburnum is ready to pour down its cascade of yellow, and over all steals the scent of lilac and narcissus. Purple-clad the iris vies in loyalty with the kingly and ruddy gold of the wallflowers. Far from gardens and haunts of men, over the sloping meadows skirting the glimmering masses of the gorse, throughout the noon the lapwing

lazily fans the air, uttering ever and anon its characteristic and dispiriting cry.

The bees at last have deserted the sycamore; the blue mist of the forget-me-nots has faded from the garden; the lapwing has ceased its cry above the glimmering gorse; and the swallow rests its wearied wings. 'Tis the hour of tenebræ!

A sound of compline bells drift tunefully upon the air, across the leafy distance, which fast grows to darker shades of green. Up from the west are flung great strangely-formed cumulus of faded mingled gold and rose above the smouldering fire of the sunset; the clouds slowly rise, and, separating, seems to drift swiftly apart until they hang suspended in the clear night atmosphere. At last is dimmed, dying gradually and unperceived, the "palpitating blue" of May's daytime hours; and as slowly also has faded the beauty of earth, lit with the glory of light-reflecting leaf. Beautiful to behold are the many nocturnal effects which Nature sets before us ere she keeps her hours of tenebræ, when everything is silenced save one voice, the voice of Philomel, that sings through the hours of darkness to the stars; for its love, the rose, is yet unborn. It is at this hour when sitting "between the lights," and some softly diffused odour carries us back to the past in a dream; then our memories go gleaning to golden fields, whose ungathered grain (treasured in the heart's garner) is the May-times and Flowerlands that were ours in years ago; or maybe it is some garden we have loved in our youth. Such an one as described by a writer in the *Nineteenth Century*:—

"On some of these the destroying hand has not yet passed. There was a stamp of character and all the charms

of a surprise in the distinctive peculiarities of our old-fashioned walled gardens. One was famous for its peaches, sheltered from the early frosts by the thatched coping of its mud walls; another for its wealth of golden-drop plums. In one there was a shady corner for lilies of the valley; in another a sunny exposure, where the autumn violets were the first to bloom. In all there were grass alleys, crooked and hoary old apple-trees, valued as much for their age as for the quality of their fruit. There was a wealth and variety of pot-herbs. One wall was crowned by a patch of yellow sechium, another was fringed with wallflowers, and the old bricks were often covered by a network of the delicate and beautiful creeper, the 'mother of millions.' There was the delightful smell of newly-turned mould, to mingle with the fragrance of a hedge of sweet-peas, or a bed of clove gillyflowers. Sweet-william and mignonette filled the vacant spaces, and the bees from a row of straw hives were humming over all."—MARGARET A. PAUL.

"Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,
Trained to stand in rows and asking if they please."

—GEORGE MEREDITH.

MAY

NOW is the time when the hawthorns don their robes
of purest white, when field and meadow spread their
lustrous cloth of gold, when, to use Shakespeare's words,
"The air, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical
covering is fretted with golden fire." Of this pleasant season
Swinburne again sings:—

"In hawthorn-time the heart is light,
The world is sweet in sound and sight,
Glad thoughts and birds take flower and flight."

Our Laureate, too, is very lavish in his praises of this delightful season, and especially so of the time

"When the hawthorn all ablow,
Mimics the defeated snow."

Now are the swallows busy gathering material with which to build their homes beneath our eaves. Watch them at the edge of stream and pond; with what a will they work, darting to and fro from eave to stream, flashing in the sunlight, outracing the wind! Gardens are starred with tufts of London pride, their twinkling blossoms dancing merrily in the breeze; the lupins are showing colour; no garden seems perfect without their beautiful spikes. I do love them!

While reading to-day a little volume of tender verses
by Lizette Woodward Reese, entitled "A Handful of

Lavender," I found one of the prettiest of garden songs, written for a fly-leaf of Herbert's poems :—

"Year after year, from dusk to dusk,
How sweet this English garden grows !
Steeped in two centuries' sun and musk,
Walled from the world in grey repose ;
Harbour of honey-freighted bees,
And wealthy with the rose.

Here pinks with spices in their throats
Nod by the bitter marigold ;
Here nightingales with haunting notes,
When east and west with stars are bold,
From out the twisted hawthorn trees,
Sing back the weathers old.

All tuneful winds do down it pass ;
The leaves a sudden whiteness show,
And delicate noises fill the grass ;
The only flakes its paces know
Are petals blown off briers long,
And heaped on blades below.

Ah ! dawn and dusk, year after year,
'Tis more than these that keep it rare !
We see the saintly master here,
Pacing along the alleys fair,
And catch the throbbing of their song
Across the amber air !"

On either side of me, as I walk through the woods in the May noon, the ways in certain places are still embrowned with last year's leaves ; faintly they crackle where the sunlight falls upon them between the branches. Perchance this pleasant sound is the voice of the new leaves struggling for the light beneath them, whispering, " We want to feel the kiss of the

breeze ; we want to see the sun and the blue skies of summer that sparkle above the trees' crests ! " Whilst walking through fields golden with May dandelions, our thoughts naturally drift to those prose poets of the country side—Richard Jefferies, Thoreau, and Burroughs. We think of Jefferies when the dandelions sparkle at our feet—how he loved them ! The voices of the birds make us dream of Thoreau—how minutely he described them ! At the sight of flowing silvery streams we almost feel the presence of Burroughs at our side—how vividly he painted in words the charms of stream and tree ! And Nature gives to each of us, as she gave to these, an opportunity of studying and proclaiming her beauties !

Is there anything more pleasant than to walk in a May garden at dawn amid the flowers silvered with dewdrops ? To walk in the rays of the newly-risen sun is to fully realise the motto upon the sundial—" *Lux est umbra Dei.*"

"I go like one in a dream, unbidden my feet know the way
To that garden . . . in blossom with the red and white hawthorn
of May."

—MATHILDE BLIND.

MAY

MANY a varied sweet songster is singing

"On boughs that the sweet mouth blanches
With flowery frost of May,"

and also amid the "greenest growth" of the hedgerows and thickets. How sweetly comes the song of the chaffinch, now in perfect note, described by Tennyson as a

"Helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few notes,
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er,
For all one April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it."

Who knows but what it sings for joy of its completed nest—a piece of exquisite workmanship—or at having found some wild apple hedge suited to its taste wherein to build it?

There is no time in all the year like to a morn of May, when, after a night of gentle showers, every leaf in the woods, every bud on hedge, glimmers in the sunshine.

Nothing is more delightful than a walk through our Middlesex lanes. What scene could be more fair? The very name of England is exemplified in these daisy-strewn meadows, and lanes whose hedges are o'ertwined with honeysuckle and travellers'-joy; deep fragrant denes, very emerald seas with blue waves of dancing bluebells; garden garths with their ambrosial clustering growths. What sweet invita-

tions, too, our lanes give in the hot June and July days, with their whispering shadows, and cool retreats from the sun, where bees are busy among the bramble blossoms, and butterflies hover lazily around the white convolvulus vases, or, sipping the nectar, are poised gracefully on the rims of the wild roses that shine as stars in the twilight of the noontide lane.

In the lanes to-day there is a wealth of blossoms. Here and there like snow-drifts the stitchwort has opened its fragile yet exquisite buds among its narrow foliage. The beautiful *Arum maculatum* has at last shown its club-shaped *spadix* of purple colour among its glossy arrow-shaped leaves; the wonderful way in which this blossom is fertilised is known to most of us, ending in its conspicuous cylindrical mass of scarlet berries we many have admired, dotting the hedge-banks among autumn's withered leaves. Here also the guelder-rose—not the “snow-ball tree” of the garden—is showing its cymes of white in the hedge of the lane, and by its side the wild cherry is letting fall its myriads of tiny silver petals.

We are standing on the very threshold of Summer. The tufted vetch is climbing among the hawthorn, the silverweed is creeping across the pathway; while many another flower takes the sunlight's hint and hastens to offer its tribute of bright blooms.

"Red-cheeked gardens that revel in Spring."

—SWINBURNE.

MAY

A million golden chalices
Look upward to the sun ;
They tell that days of Springtime speed,
Of Summer-time begun ;
They spread their cloth of golden cups
Beneath the Maytime skies ;
Fill'd overfull with fairy wine,
Distilled for butterflies.

Oh, Maytime days, when buttercups
Are set in all the fields,
And every fair, unfolding hour
Some newer beauty yields.
Oh, golden hours of youth and May,—
Days of unclouded skies,
Whose time is short as is the flow'rs,
Brief as the butterflies !

SPRING is complete ! All things that belong to Spring, waited for throughout the long, bare days, are ours again. Some of the first joys have passed away—joys that were felt when the earliest green touched the hedges which are now unfolded into dense walls of emerald. Spring !—complete in all her magic loveliness of tint and tune : in the garden, in the meadow, by the river ; in the deep wood—everywhere overflowing with completeness. We know when Spring is ended ; one flower brings with it the news. Very beautifully of this time Richard Jefferies speaks : "A June rose ! Something caught my eye on the top of the high hawthorn hedge one evening when it was growing dusk,

and on looking again there was a spray of briar in flower—two roses in full bloom and out of reach. . . . So it is ever with the June rose. It is found unexpectedly. It is a gift, not a discovery, or anything earned—a gift like love and happiness. With ripening grasses the rose comes, and the rose is Summer: till then it is Spring.”

Spring is complete in the meadows; the high-growing sorrel makes patches of waving red, and the yellow anthers of the woodrush diffuse powdered gold. Other tokens innumerable tell of Summer’s well-coming. Especially delightful in those meadows which spread to the river’s bank is this month, with its perfume and song, and the colours on the shifting grasses. The scent is from the undimmed hawthorn and from grasses and sedges; the colours are from the deep blue myosotis, the exquisite silver water-violet, tints that take for a second a deeper shade by the quickly pacing shadow of cloud across them.

"On English ground you understand the letter
... Ere the fall, how Adam lived in a garden."
—MRS. BROWNING.

MAY

On silver flute is played Spring's truest praise,
Songs that Pan keeps his own though he be mute ;
Songs that the thrush extols in Spring's young days
On silver flute.

Tune well thy flower-lays, O orchard lute,
Whilst thou dost sit on softly lispings sprays,
Strung with the silver blossoms of the fruit.

Like meteors the falling blossoms blaze
White on the grass to wake unwakened root ;
While yet Pan's eulogist trills his sweet lays
On silver flute !

P. ANDERSON GRAHAM says in his delightful book "All the Year with Nature," of those "who will follow the calling of Adam worthily should begin by loving flowers as a scholar loves books, not for glory of having a great collection, still less for an unintelligent or semi-commercial pride in what is rare and expensive, but for themselves, their fragrance, their beauty, their foliage, or for the many curious reproductive and other gifts given them by Nature." And again Courtenay says : "Gardening is a pursuit peculiarly adapted for reconciling and combining the tastes of the two sexes, and indeed of all ages. It is, therefore, of all amusements the most retentive of domestic affection. It is, perhaps, most warmly pursued by the very young, and by those who are far advanced in life,—before the mind is occupied with worldly business, and after it has become disgusted with it.

There is nothing in it to remind of the bustle of political life, and it requires neither a sanguine disposition nor the prospect of a long life to justify the expectation of a beautiful result from the slight and easy care which it exacts. Is it too much to say that the mind which can, with genuine taste, occupy itself in gardening, must have preserved some portion of youthful purity; that it must have escaped, during its passage through the active world, its deeper contaminations, and that no shame nor remorse can have found a seat in it?"

In the garden a thrush sits singing in the rain! So beautiful, so brief has been the shower! And now that the glamour of the sunshine is over all, the trees shake themselves free of the big rain-drops, bidden to do so by the breath of the first tender wind, which touches each branch lightly, littering the floor of the orchard, scattering silver and ivory. And how opulent is the blossom at this period—the Eastertide of Nature—when the first fair flowers rise from their graves, blossoms that are pure and palely tinted; and notice what a beautiful mingle are the early petals and the silver rain! The first pale star to light the hedge—it is even now in its beauty—is that of the hawthorn; it is exquisite in its natural setting of green leaves.

"The freshe hawthorne
In white motley that so sote doth ysmell,"

sang Chaucer centuries ago, the joy of the countryside then, a joy still. And it is the hedgerow—

"Little lines of sportive wood run wild"

—that gives this country its character, and if Nature could speak, or rather, if we could read her aright, she would say

it is the hedgerow that sings her truest eulogy, for here the fairest, frailest things find a home and have their birth; here the joyful morning birds sing their sweetest carols; here in the drowsy Summer noon butterflies glitter and bees hum; here moths, waiting for dusk, light the Summer night with their silver wings; here throughout the Winter are shielded the tenderest roots!

Blossom-star, uncurling leaf, and home-come birds, all so new, seem to fill the world to-day; and yet things so old,—how old! you say. You know them all so well by rote that you expect them to appear as a matter of course. But who does not find some one fresh pleasure at least, hitherto unnoticed, be it some new shadow in the rifts of the changeful rain-burdened sky, or the light among the orchard blossom, where a thrush sits singing, singing in [the ending rain?

"A star looked down from heaven and loved a flower
Grown in earth's garden."

—WILLIAM WATSON.

MAY

A stitchwort star dawns in a bank of green,
Herald of Summer that looks on afar ;
Pale, delicate, most frail, bright with rain-sheen,
A stitchwort star.

'Mid white of may the wild birds nesting are ;
Whitethroat and redstart their new plumage preen,
Nothing of sadness now the land to mar.

The loveliness supreme is shared between
Bright heaven, green earth—a beauty singular ;
Yet in one flower Spring's beauties all are seen—
A stitchwort star.

IT appears so suddenly, it is gone so quickly, the story that comes upon the earth when the reign of Spring is fully established. The fruit-trees' bridal garments are faded in too short a time ; the coltsfoot's yellow stars are changed to a white globe of silk too soon. What May once meant to the rural folk in this country it means no longer : no more are seen the quaint, innocent customs that once the month brought with it. It means nothing now but a gayer garden, where the sun shines more steadfastly.

Yet the worship of Pan still exists. In Tuscany, Florence, and many other parts of Italy, he is still somewhat of the god he was. "Still the rude people bow down to him," says Maurice Hewlett, "still honour him with gifts of flowers, songs or artless custom, as on May-day—the *Giorno de' Grilli*. You may still see wayside shrines, votive tablets, humble offerings set in a farm wall or country hedge, starry and fresh as a

patch of yellow flowers in a ryefield." Under the May blossoms still the Florentine peasants sing their *Maggiolata*: alas, we have let all the visible thanksgivings for May and Spring disappear from our land. But let us hope the gladness is still in the hearts of many of us.

Here is a picture of May from Gabrielle D'Annunzio's *Rondo Pastorale*: "To bountiful May the wind makes vague lamentations through the forest; the choruses ascend heavenward, and the rivers bring large treasures of water. The beautiful hills are smiling with the flush of the daybreak, from whence a thousand perfumes ascend to heaven. The shepherd takes his flute, surrounded by his white flock, and from it extracts new modulations, while to its melody listens his love from beyond the flowering hedges."

For a few brief days the orchards are turned into fairyland with blossom beauty, the first fantastic touch of Spring. Hardly has this impulsive loveliness commenced ere it vanishes and sobers down to restful green, the clear, green foliage of Maytime leafland. Quite as lovely are the moods of May in other lands: May in Troubadour Land, for instance, as described by H. Baring Gould, when "The crags are rich in colour, the cytisus waving its golden hair, the pelargonium blazing scarlet, beds of white stock wafting fragrance, violets scrambling over every soft bank of deep earth exhaling fragrance; roses, not many in flower, but their young leaves in masses of claret-red; wherever a ledge allowed it, there pansies of velvety blue and black and brown have been planted. In a hot Spring sun the cedars and umbrella pines exhale their aromatic breath, and the flowering birch rains down its yellow dust over one from its swaying catkins."

Here in the earlier period of perfected Spring, Nature delights to paint her studies for our eyes in quieter colour-schemes, preferably in white and green and blue, and for the latter tint a writer of note says that the earth is scattered "with little bits of fallen sky," the blue of the periwinkle's trailing stars in the wood's more shadowy ways; the blue-bells' clearer sapphire among the bracken-crosiers; so pure a hue Nature

"The million-handed painter pours;
And the tints of heaven reply."

Mrs. Craik says that it is "especially of days such as this, when birds are singing, and green leaves budding, and all Nature bursting out into redundant life—innocent of authors, painters, and books, do we long for a brief season of that celestial silence—to lie down and dream, without order, arrangement, or even consciousness in the dreams; to gaze, enjoy, observe, and act naturally and involuntarily; to live, and see all around us living, the life of a mere flower of the field."

The year has opened once again its ancient missal to the sweetest chapter of all, written in blue, and silver, and gold, and headed "Spring." Penned by no human hand is the story written therein, no earthly mind was large enough to conceive it, no artist has such colours at his command to depict the glories of these pictures Spring sets before us. The story of Spring is interpreted to us in many ways: it is sung by the birds; the stream sings it in its silver melodies as it flows through flowered meads; the wind whispers it:

"The merry blackbird and the thrush
With song makes jubilant each bush;
The very whisper of the breeze
Is fraught with fragrant melodies."

Joyous indeed are the interludes May plays between the hours of dusk and dawn. Passing at morn by the hawthorn hedges we may hear many a shrill chorus of hungry bird-children, and, on peeping between the white blossoms, espy a cluster of little golden throats.

Month of May! O time of love and perfect joy; blest season of our lives, when we are supremely happy; when Time's sea is rippling calmly beneath a sky which almost dazzles us with its peerless blue, or, reflecting the rosy tints of sunset, predicts a fair to-morrow. The first bright star appears, but ere it has risen, ere the mellow dusk has ripened into golden eventide, May's interludes are hushed, to begin afresh when the first ray of light in the eastern sky wakes from sleep another dawn.

"Give me odorous at sunrise, a garden of beautiful flowers."

—WALT WHITMAN.

MAY

THE sparkling light, the joyfulness of awakened day reveals the loveliness of Springtime now at its zenith. Trees and hedges glitter with their garments of new leaves, and everywhere buds are gathering strength to help to swell the floral blaze. Invigorating is the air in the hours of early morn when walking by ways where apple trees are heavily laden with the blush of their blossoms, lit with the silver "drops of sparkling magical May-dew wine, Heaven's vintage, pressed from grapes grown in the garden of the stars." In rejoicing meadows the buttercups unclothe their golden lips to be fed with the sunlight, and to receive the morn-kiss of early bee. Song of bird in tree and hedge, the gentle low of kine and bleat of new-born lamb are the only voices of Springtime morn. Everything seems to partake of the charm of youth; high above, the tiniest baby-clouds are floating; and hark! when dawn has grown to morn, the voices of children in the garden, whose laughter harmonises so perfectly with Nature's voices in May. For Spring is the song for childhood; it is simple to learn, it is easy to sing, a song laden with silvery vowels; what a contrast to the song of age crooned in the misty wintry shadows, that is so strange a story, so hard to sing, so difficult to modulate with its cumbersome consonants!

A few hours after dawn—about eight o'clock—every bird-voice is hushed awhile; blackbird and thrush leave branch to

breakfast in the meadow. One still hears the musical murmur of bees as they rifle the golden-green blossoms of the sycamore; and close by, the first few white petals have opened on the spikes of the horse-chestnut amid the rich green of its hand-like foliage, waving in the breeze, greeting the swallow, bird of the Spring morning.

Changeful May-hours,
New leaves, new flow'rs,
Sun and soft show'rs
 Write down "Spring."
Rainbows arching,
Waters dancing,
Songsters spreading
 Flashing wing.

Zephyrs whisp'ring,
Rain-jewels glist'ning,
New leaves lisp'ing
 Melodies;
May, so soon full
With birds tuneful,
With thoughts Juneful
 Roseward flies.

"To one who has a garden soul, the grouping of flowers in a garden becomes not only a labour of intense love but a distinct art."

—HELEN MILMAN.

MAY

A GLORIOUS birth is the early sunshine of the Spring, flooding the world to-day and calling from their winter sleep and dreams the later buds and flowers. A tender time as of hope fulfilled, a period of which Christina Rossetti notes when she sings—

"There is no time like Spring,
When life's alive in everything,
Before new nestlings sing . . .
Before the daisy grows a common flower."

Who at the sunrise does not feel the precious gladness of the new life that is in the air, whispering a gracious message—

"Oh, who at sunrise could be ought but glad—
I hear the loud,
Yet mellow thrush's note ; a blackbird sings
With sudden burst of song ; a lark upsprings,"

sings Mackenzie Bell. And this early season, "before the daisy grows a common flower," has called forth many an epitaph from every poet enshrined for us in some haunting line of theirs ; many a powerful passage penned by writer and thinker often arrests our attention, and which matches these days of increasing loveliness. Sydney Smith writes very beautifully of this time : "Walk in the fields," he says, "and if you carry with you a mind unpolluted with harm, watch how it is impressed ! You are delighted with the beauty of

THE GARDEN WITH ITS MANY CARES
ALL WELL REPAID.

Couper.

colours. Are not these colours beautiful? You breathe vegetable fragrance. Is not that fragrance grateful? You see the sun rising from behind a mountain, and the heavens painted with light. Is not that renewal of the light of the morning sublime?" It is all beautiful, but it must be beheld unfettered; it must be sought for in the open air. Somewhere in one of his poems, Emerson confesses—

"I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings his song, but it pleases not now;
For I did not bring home the river and sky;
He sang to my ear—they sang to my eye."

Before these tints "sing to the eye," in any loud or pronounced note, there are beauties on every hedge, lying so tenderly and bright, that one is fain to stay and admire.

Apple blossoms! Is there anything more beautiful or more suggestive of loveliness, or for perfect delicacy of colouring among the gifts of Spring than this blending of white and rose and red? Apple blossom, the blue sky, a soft white cloud, a bird's song—the whole of Spring's story told in the fewest of words. There is no month in all the twelve when each thing in Nature is so busy: hastening clouds and swift showers, with swifter coming sunlight; birds busy with nesting operations; the tall growing spikes of green that seem to add an inch every day; fast-opening blossoms; leaves in all haste to expand. All these things with one voice acclaim hope personified, beauty perfected! Under the apple-trees laden with roseate bloom, amid so simple a scene one could muse, and yet never know the mysterious meaning underlying the beauty of it all; why this

rosy star of apple bloom above is given its five petals! why to the birds nesting in the fork of the tree's blossoming bough is given so sweet a song! You and I know it only as Spring!

Among the pink bloom, with its sweetly diffused odour, one of the wild birds comes to the garden to nest, that of the missel-thrush. In the earliest time of Spring this bird's notes fall sweetly on the ear with a song of hopeful praise. And I repeat again, what a tender chapter from Nature's book, the nest of the missel-thrush in the fork of the blossoming bough, its greenish-white eggs littered with the petals of apple-blossom!

The wood-spurge should not be overlooked. It is the earliest of spring flowers; to-day its emerald cluster of new flowers crowning its purple foliage, a noticeable ornament of the hedge-side all winter through, is the striking chord of colour.

"England . . . from side to side of her delightful isle
Ambrosial gardens."

—COWPER.

MAY

"**S**UNSHINE and air! Bird-music and Spring!" This line of the poet's is the true keynote of this enjoyable month of the whole year. The sunshine seems so wonderfully bright, the air is so pure and sweet, and the birds vie with each other in proclaiming the beauties of May. Perhaps there are hardly sweeter lines to be found anywhere in praise of May and of our simple English pastoral landscape than those of Milton's song, "On May Morning"—

"Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and brings with her
The flow'ry May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.
Hail! bounteous May, that doth inspire
Mirth, and youth, and warm desire;
Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early song,
And welcome thee and wish thee long."

If May is not exactly the full time of flowers, it is certainly the month of birds. Every writer praises them, novelist and poet and thinker alike. Here is a graceful bird-thought which Marie Corelli has written in one of her charming books: "A shower of melody rains from the trees on every side—the pure, sweet, passionate tones pierce the ear like the repeated chime of little golden bells—the beautiful, the tender, the God-inspired birds sing their love stories simply and with perfect rapture—love stories untainted by hypocrisy, unsullied by crime—different, ah! so very differ-

ent, from the love stories of selfish humanity! The exquisite poetic idyll of a bird's life and love—is it not a thing to put us inferior creatures to shame? . . . For are we ever as true in our vows as the lark to his mate? . . . Are we as sincere in our thanksgiving for the sunlight as the merry robin, who sings as blithely in the Winter snows as in the flower-filled mornings of Spring?"

May suggests so many beautiful thoughts—thoughts that come to us as we look upon the great gold marsh-marigolds in the fringe of rushes of the stream-side, or watch the broad sunbeams cleaving a passing cloud and rushing rapturously to earth; or listen to the cuckoo "calling, calling, never weary of calling to the Spring." Another Spring-thought that comes to memory is that from one of Mary Linskill's novels, so charming in expression that it is worth repeating: "Better even than the after-vision of poets and seers is one free, fresh hour when your footstep falls upon the daisies, having nowhere else to fall for the crowding of them; when you feel upon your cheek and forehead the cool, dainty airs that come up from the blue sea, and reach you through the boughs of tufted larches and tasselled willows; and when your ear listens entranced—always newly entranced—to the voice of the blackbird that comes to you from the whinbrake on the hill."

The cuckoo calling from emerald branches; the first swallows swiftly darting through the transparent air in these the glad days of May. The warm, gracious shower has quickened into life the last delaying buds; while in the garden, as in daisied mead, we see the footsteps of Proserpina.

The whiteness of the orchard blossom is fading in a most beautiful manner, for ever as it grows dim so the green of the foliage becomes more pronounced. In a few meadows near, one of the most handsome of our wild Spring blossoms is now to be found in the Fritillaria (*Fritillaria Meliagris*), its chequered bells of dull purple contrasting beautifully with the new green tint of leaf and grass around it. In the gentle breeze "daisies pied" and "ladies' smocks all silver white" are dancing, all the trees are glittering with their new sun-steeped leaves, save one; only the ash is utterly bare and winter-like; but later on, what a merry tune the summer wind will play among its graceful foliage, when on every stave of twig and branch will be crowding little golden-green clusters of "keys." Two of the most beautiful of golden blossoms—the barberry and the gorse—are now showing their floral wealth in real earnest. Of the latter blossom, and of this season, Swinburne sings—

"The larks are loud above our leagues of whin,
Now the sun's perfume fills their glorious gold
With odour like their colour : all the wold
Is only light and song and wind wherein
These twain are blent in one bright shining din."

"Earth seems a garden in its loveliest dress."

—COWPER.

MAY

IT is king-cup time—king-cup time in the meadow! The great burly blossoms of gold are gleaming in the meadows and beside the stream. Here the spell of Spring is over all; fragile "lady's smocks" have opened their dainty pale violet crosses. The promise of Summer's wealth comes suddenly; it is seen in the clumps of meadow-sweet foliage fantastically showing the undersilver of each leaf, upturned momentarily by the wind; tussocks of figwort and ivory-flowered comfrey; loftily growing grasses; but the king-cup is dominant. Shakespeare's "winking marybuds," and after that the "lady's smock, all silver white," are the two flowers of to-day, and perhaps two of the loveliest that bloom betwixt the first rainbow of Spring until Autumn's last leaf.

Over in the grove of cherry trees weighed down with white blossom, the blackbird sings a liquid melody; singing, perhaps, because the wealth of blossom on the near boughs promise many a luscious meal, when the silver stars have undergone their wonderful changes, till ended at last in the fruit hanging like rubies suspended from delicate threads. A breath of the lilac borne on the breeze from some near garden brings Walt Whitman's lines, "When lilacs bloomed," to memory—

"Ever returning Spring . . . lilac blooming perennial . . .

The lilac-bush tall-growing, with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,

With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the per-
fume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the door-
yard,
With delicate-colour'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of
rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break.”

"Or mira l'alto provreder divino:
Che l'uno e l'atro aspetto della fede
Igualmente empierà questo giardino."
—DANTE.

MAY

THE hedges are wreathed with the "flower o' the May,"
in the fields, in garden and along the hedgerows. To
use a line of Christina Rossetti's—

"Spring spreads one green lap of flowers."

Looking from the brow of the hill one is especially struck with the beauty of the blending tints of the trees' new foliage as they stand massed together in the woodlands below; there is the bronze-like colour of the oak standing side by side with the elm's vivid green; against the dark pines wave the chest-nuts, the foliage touched as with snow—the white of their spikes of blossom in full flower. One could very easily make a lengthy list of the fair blossoms now to be found in the "green lap of Spring"; and, as we behold, many a poet's praise of them and of this fair season comes to memory. May's blossoms are ever glorious in colour and perfect in form; indeed, no artificial colour, however beautiful, can surpass the tint of flower which each passing season bestows upon its certain blooms. At the present time no two more exquisite colours are there than the purple iris and the glossy gold of the buttercups; lay them side by side and the contrast is very fine; no fabric of royal robe, however finely woven or finished in texture, approaches their soft petals woven of light and air.

The handsome comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) has put forth its white flowers, and the herb-bennet (*Géum urbánum*)

by its side grows tall and ready to show its well-known yellow flowerets beside the hedge. Bugle, speedwell, the two plain-tains (especially *P. lanceolata*) and woodrush grow lusty in the fields and meadows, where among them play the children, telling the fair fleeting hours of May by blowing the "dandelion clocks"; or, heedless of flying time, vainly they try to fetter the sweet moments with their fragile daisy-chains. The butterflies pass from field to field, blown by the May-time wind, like twin leaves fluttering from a white rose. Woods are filled with birds, the air is full of their voices, and that "wandering voice"—the note of the cuckoo—is the chiefest of them all. The tree-creeper nimbly climbs the rugged oak; blackbirds spread their dark wings in flight across the golden buttercups, calling shrilly when disturbed. How shy the birds are! yet, however much we may love the trust which they sometimes give us, in their timidity they seem a creature more ethereal, and in their shyness belonging more to fairyland.

The ferns uncurl, rising from the ground like a miniature fountain sending out liquid emerald. From the clefts of many a rockery seems to issue forth golden foam in the massed blossoms of *Sedum aureum*; along the border the *aubrietia* shows a thousand tiny purple crosses, and an endless array of bright flowers is bidden by the sovran voice of May to help swell with its beauty the loveliness of coming Summer.

"Enter, then, the rose-garden when the first sunshine sparkles in the dew, and enjoy with thankful happiness one of the loveliest scenes on earth."

—DEAN HOLE.

**"Dost liegt ein rothblühender Garten
Im stillen Mondenschein."**

—HEINE.

JUNE

June in the summertide garden,
Splendour of border and bed ;
Pure lilies, white, tall and stately,
Passionate roses of red ;

Marigolds golden, yet homely ;
Pansies of dark purple hue ;
Deep-dyed, clove-scented carnations ;
Lavender, southernwood, rue ;

Passion-flower, sunflower, clematis ;
Foxglove and lupin and phlox ;
Jasmine and thrift and verbena
Framed in a border of box.

June in the summertide garden
Bids the world gay garments wear,
Oh, what a wreath of rich wonders
Laid at the feet of the year.

**"Some tempestuous morn in early June, . . .
When garden-walks and all the grassy floor
With blossoms red and white of fallen may
And chestnut-flowers are strewn."**

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

"He who would have beautiful roses in his garden must have
beautiful roses in his heart."

—DEAN HOLE.

JUNE

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,—
The bridal of the earth and sky."

—GEORGE HERBERT.

GREETING to June. The garden is overflowing with the first flowers of Summer; the sky above them is one bright tint of blue, bereft of a single, even the tiniest, cloud. Truly, on such a day as this George Herbert must have seen "the bridal of the earth and sky." Over all the fields is spread the gold of the buttercups,—the golden ring which Nature gives, binding as one in their union heaven and earth. Every corner of the lovely world holds tokens of joy to-day, more especially the fields and hedgerows; here the honey-sweet scent of the gorse is on the warm air, wooing bee and butterfly to partake of its perfume. In the chestnuts, whose blossom is the glory of the land at the present time, what a music of bees is among their leaves! Along the stream-side, as one walks at noonday, there is heard a gentle chorus from the glittering golden wings of insects collected together at certain bends and turns of the shallows over the sun-flecked breast of the winding water.

What shall I say of the garden of early June? As I stand here in the clear light, from the fields or lane a-near is borne on the wind the scent of the hawthorn, and from the garden itself, giving odours of lilac and narcissus, numberless memories come. "It is certainly true," says a writer, "that nothing calls up associations of the past as does the

sense of smell. A breath of perfume stealing through the air, or entering into an open window, and one is reminded of some far-off place or some long past day when the same perfume floated along, and for a single moment the past will seem more real than the present." Another graceful garden book says of the present time: "From a bed of emerald leaves, slowly unfolding, perfume-clad, a queen comes forth—the first June rose. The brown moth flitting at eve, the butterfly glittering by through the day, bear the news through the garden, field, and lane. With bird-notes mingle the flower-voices, in the language of the quaint days when flowers served as speech between shy lovers, and each maiden, working in her garden, lived and dreamed of it. The flowering almond spoke of hope, the bluebell nodded constancy. . . . But roses, whether they are red or white, pink-hearted or yellow, all sing of love, the changeful melody of many keys."

"The Rose. . . . 'Laughing,' she says, 'into the World I blow ; . .
The silken tassel of my Purse tear, and its Treasure on the Garden
throw.'"
—OMAR KHAYYAM.

JUNE

AUTHOR, Poet and Painter, has each in his own way tried in tint and rhyme and glowing description to catch some of the passing glories of June. It is not given to any one individual to interpret the many beauties in a single picture or poem, although such renderings of praise are helpful to us in reading

"How sweet the sight of roses,
In English lanes of June,
When every flower uncloses
To meet the kiss of noon."

—(MACKENZIE BELL.)

John Davidson's "Birds in June" brings Nature very near to us—

"High in the oak-trees, where the fresh leaves sprout,
The blackbirds with their oboe voices make
The sweetest broken music all about
The beauty of the day for beauty's sake,
The wanton shadow and the languid cloud,
The grass-green velvet where the daisies crowd ;
And all about the air that softly comes
Thridding the hedgerows with its noiseless feet,
The purling waves with muffled elfin drums,
That step along their pebble paven street ;
And all about the mates whose love they won,
And all about the sunlight and the sun.
The thrushes into song more bravely launch
Than thrushes do in any other dell ;
Warblers and willow-wrens on every branch,
Each hidden by a leaf, their rapture tell ;
Green-finches in the elms sweet nothings say,
Busy with love from dawn to dusk are they.

FROM A MIDDLESEX GARDEN

A passionate nightingale a-down the lane
Shakes, with the force and volume of his song,
A hawthorn's heaving foliage ; such a strain,
Self-caged like him to make his singing strong
Some poet may have made in days of yore
Untold, unwritten, lost for evermore."

How many a tender flower-rhyme and sweetly-worded
epitaph in praise of June passes through one's mind. It is
now George Meredith's—

"Along my path the bugloss blue,
The star with frint in moss ;
The foxgloves drop from throat to top
A daily lesser bell."

Or William Morris's—

"Fair is the morn to-day, the blossom scent
Floats across the fresh grass, and the bees,
With low song, to rose and lily go,
A gentle wind is in the heavy trees."

Or, maybe, Swinburne's—

"In the red-rose land not a mile
Of meadows from stile to stile,
Of the valleys from stream to stream,
But the air is a long sweet dream,
And the earth is a wide sweet smile."

"O my garden full of roses, red as passion and as sweet."
—PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

JUNE

"THAT Spring should vanish with the Rose!" is the lament of the Persian poet, and we may even now behold, with perhaps a like regret, the closing of the youthful year's "sweet-scented manuscript." From the fields already has died the one pale Spring tint of emerald; on the top of the grown grass has appeared a swarty red, the Summer tint of the earlier flowering grasses and blossoming sorrel. But every bloom pales before that flower of flowers, which has its birth in June, and soon throughout the land there will be

"Roses, roses everywhere."

Of this loved flower, how much has been, and still continues to be, written. The antiquity of the rose dates back for so long a time that the exact account of its origin is entirely lost. In the Biblical writings it is not mentioned earlier than the reign of Solomon; but the allusion to it then made seems to indicate that the flower had already been long known, for the essence of roses was extensively used in Jerusalem and Judæa during the reign of the luxurious king. In Egypt the rose is depicted on a number of very early monuments, believed to date from 3500 B.C., and in the tomb of an Egyptian princess, a year ago, several hermetically-sealed phials were found, which on being opened contained attar of roses. The rose is one of those flowers which are taken by the people of every land as too well known to need description, for it is a singular fact that every continent, with the exception of Australia, produces wild roses. Even the frozen regions of

the North, where summer lasts but two months, boast of roses, and travellers through Greenland and Northern Siberia find at their certain season an abundance of roses of a certain kind, for there are over one thousand species of the wild rose known to botanists. Far away down the dim vistas of ages to the present time the praises of the rose, justly designated "the Queen of Blossoms," have been sung, and is the eternal theme of sage, poet, and man of the world of all countries alike. The word *rosa*, the old Latin name, is derived from the Greek *rhodon*, "because," says Gerarde, "it sendeth foorth plentie of smell." Throughout the vegetable kingdom there is no genus which commands—and receives—so much attention from horticulturists as this order. Apart from the value of the genus as an unrivalled collection of the most beautiful floral objects, it forms an important factor in commerce; the manufacture of rose-water and attar giving employment to thousands of persons. The rose is also a prominent contributor to materia medica. As the emblem of youth it was dedicated to Aurora; of love and beauty to Venus; of danger and fugacity to Cupid. It was given by the latter, according to classic writers, as a bribe to Harpocrates, the god of silence; hence, undoubtedly, the origin of the common expression, "under the rose." In ancient Egypt it was also the token of silence, as in ancient Greece this same significance was preserved where Eros is often represented as offering a rose to Harpocrates, indicating the secrecy in which love doth ever delight.

In England the musk-rose was one of the earliest species of roses cultivated, and rose-water was introduced about the time of the Crusaders, when it became a custom to offer it to guests in noblemen's houses with which to wash their hands

after meals. It is believed that the oldest rose-bush in existence is one trained to the side of the cathedral in Hildersheim, Germany. The root is buried in the crypt below the choir; the stem is a foot thick, and half-a-dozen branches nearly cover the east side. Its age is unknown, but documents exist proving that a bishop nearly a thousand years ago had it protected by a stone roof, which is still extant. Many and varied are the uses to which the rose is put. The Orientals make beads of a beautiful black by pounding rose-leaves in an iron mortar, which gives the paste its colour, when it is moulded and dried and perforated with a red-hot wire, and finally perfumed with attar. Attar of roses has been manufactured for a very long time in India, and the manner in which it was first discovered is told as follows: Noorjeehan Begum, the favourite wife of Jeehan-Geer, was one day walking in her garden, through which ran a canal of rose-water, when she remarked some oily particles floating on the surface. These, at her command, were collected, and their aroma found to be so delicious, that means were devised to produce the precious oil in a regular way. Well does the perfumer turn the

“Sweet odour which doth in it live”

—as Shakespeare says, singing of the rose—to account; for he compels the lovely blossom to yield its aroma to him in every form, obtaining from it essential oil, a distilled water, a pomade. Even its withered petals are rendered available to form the ground of satchet powder, and the fragrant pot-pourri, so dearly loved and so exquisitely made by our grandmothers.

Roses of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries included the old Provence and the old-fashioned despised cabbage

rose found in village gardens of to-day, and are still the most fragrant of any; they were also the rose of old painters. Damask roses there were, crimson and white, but semi-double. Sometimes a bee would unconsciously fertilise a white rose with the pollen of a red, and there came a new variety, striped red and white, which the raiser named the York and Lancaster. This rose is sometimes yet to be found in old nurseries. These old-time blooms were probably the roses that erstwhile grew in Temple Gardens, and became the distinctive badges of York and Lancaster.

There are no descriptions of the rose that I know of more quaint than those to be found in the delightful volumes of England's two old botanists, Parkinson and Gerarde. Parkinson says: "The great varietie of roses is much to bee admired, beeing more than is to bee seene in any other shrubby plant that I know, both for colour, forme, and smell. I have to furnish this garden thirty sorts at least, every one notably differing from the other and all fit to bee here entertained: for there are some other that, beeing wilde and of no beauty or smell, we forbear, and leave to their wilde habitations." Gerarde says: "The plant of roses, though it be a shrub full of prickles, yet it had been more fit and convenient to have placed it with the most glorious flowers of the world than to insert it here (the third booke of the 'Historie of Plants') among base and thornie shrubs; for the rose doth deserve the chiefest and most principall place among all flowers whatsoever, being not merely esteemed for his beautie, vertues, and his fragrant and odoriferous smell, but because it is the honour and ornament of our English sceptre, as by conjunction appeareth in the uniting of those two most royal houses of Lancaster and York, which pleasant

flowers deserve the chiefest place in crownes and garlands as out of 'Anacreon,' a moste ancient Greeke poet, which is Englished thus—

'The rose is the honour and beautie of flowres,
The rose is the care and love of the Spring,
The rose is the pleasure of th' heavenly pow'rs,
The boy of faire Venus, Cythera's darling,
Doth wrap her head round with garlands of rose
When to the daunces of the Graces she goes.'"

"A dear old-fashioned garden,—
Roses, and sunflowers tall;—
The scent of the long box-borders,
And of ripening fruit on the wall."

—CLIFFORD HARRISON.

JUNE

AN English garden!—

"A place of wind and flowers,
Full of sweet trees and colour of glad grass."

In the clear light of June, there is no place in all the world more perfect, no home of peace more sweet, than that to be found in an old English garden. One may read of and almost envy other gardens to be found in the world: those of Kashmir—of whose glories Moore told us in "Lalla Rookh"—

"With roses the brightest that earth ever gave";

Gardens of Shiraz, with their nightingales, narcissi and roses, and blooms diffusing the subtlest perfumes! One may at times sigh for the gardens of Italy, "with their high hedges of rhododendron and jessamine, that have all Boccaccio between their walls, all Petrarca in their leaves, all Raffaele in their skies." Gardens of wondrous beauty that hem the Bosphorus; Japanese gardens that are perfect idylls, designed expressly for seclusion, ease and meditation, each in accord with the temperament and sentiment of the owner, where every leaf, every grace of bough and curve of stalk, every stone and winding path has a meaning! But an English garden has a charm all its own. To-day tender doves, high in the rose-twined dove-cot, are cooing softly. Voices blend har-

AN ENGLISH GARDEN.

moniously with the whisper from breeze-touched branches of the trees around, whose gnarled trunks and swollen boles are telling of noble age. These trees consist of acacia, among whose feathery foliage soon will hang the grape-like pearly blossoms; purple beeches, sombre pines and gloomy yews, now lit here and there with white syringa blossoms. In the sunlit borders, amid twinkling marigolds, sparkles the blue borage, diffusing an odour cool and refreshing, telling of the use to which it was once put in the preparation of old-fashioned summer drinks. Here and there a clump of golden broom, lavender and rosemary, pansies, mignonette and stocks, thyme and rue! Over arch and arbour, in lovely disorder, is entangled honeysuckle, sweet-briar, and passiflora. Forgotten roses linger here, the damask and *Rosa centifolia*—or “the rose of a hundred leaves!” From clefts in the masonry grow tufts of yellow fumitory, pellitory-of-the-wall, and purple toad-flax. With the scent of old flowers around one, naturally come thoughts of olden times; here little old-world children played when these aged trees were young; here lovers, with all life before them unfolding like a beauteous rose, sought the cool shade of pleached alley from the noon sun, or lingering by the new sundial, what time fell, the blue twilight enwrapping the world with a divine silence, read together the newly-engraved motto, that to-day is almost undecipherable: “Time, the devourer of all things.” Hard by one may read of those who wandered here in letters of moss on stones grown silvery grey with the rain of many seasons.

To-day there comes an invitation from a Kentish garden: “Come and stay with us: the thrift is in bloom.” It is worth much to see that garden, which at this season grows

pink with the thrift. It is a typical English garden, now gay with gaudy peonies, a short while since purple with iris, and that soon will hold the loveliest clumps of *Lilium auratum*. This garden, I know, is full of happy bees, and the June breezes are at play amid the vine-leaves, while swifts whirl round the trembling poplars.

Join a merry roundelay,
(Summer's here and will not stay !),
Lights and shadows dance and play
In and out 'mid leafy spray.
Sunbeams race o'er fragrant thyme,
Drowsy bee hums golden rhyme,
Underneath the scented lime ;
(Summer is the sweetest time !)

Sing heigh-ho ! for Junetide's day,
(Summer passes hence for aye),
Time enough to sigh and say :
" Well-a-day ! and well-a-way ! "

Join a merry roundelay,
(Youth is here and will not stay !)
Lad and lass be glad to-day,
Love and laugh while yet ye may !
Row where silver lilies beam
On the breast of dimpled stream,
Where the noontide hours gleam,
(Love and youth pass like a dream !)

Sing heigh-ho ! for Junetide's day,
(Summer passes hence for aye),
Time enough to sigh and say :
" Well-a-day ! and well-a-way ! "

"Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees."
—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

JUNE

"Rose of a hundred leaves," * bright flower the dawnlight
is wooing,
Over thy fragrant heart, the morn-sun his gold veil
weaves ;
Summer again is in thee its beautiful brief life renewing,
"Rose of a hundred leaves."

Flower, born of morning's laughter, thy incense the sun
retrieves,
Soft odours lock'd in thy breast when night was sur-
rounding, endewing
With silvery jewels a thousand that till morn to thy
lustre cleaves.

When whispering twilight bids thy petals of coral be
strewing,
Rose of a day ! thou lett'st fall all thy beauty where
green turf heaves,
Shedding a century of leaves where Summer her steps is
pursuing,
"Rose of a hundred leaves."

THESE present days is the time of the rose—

"What is sweeter than a rose ?
What is fairer ?"

asks George Herbert ; and truly, it is unsurpassable in the
fragrance it bestows, and matchless the form and grace of its
blossoms—a flower which, as Shakespeare says,

"By any other name would smell as sweet."

* "Rose of a hundred leaves," *i.e.* *Rosa centifolia*.

The rose is essentially the flower of flowers, the one flower of the year. Almost every one knows their many different names and their separate charms: *La France*, arrayed in silvery rose; the brilliant crimson of *Général Jacqueminot*, with its exquisite odour; the salmon-fawn of *Gloire de Dijon*; the deep orange-gold of *William Allen Richardson*, and the like, to be found in almost every garden. A brief history of this flower will be found elsewhere, and the following are a few of the many superstitions surrounding it. The Greek myth is that the red rose was metamorphosed from white by the blood of *Venus* when she trod on its thorns while hastening to aid the dying *Narcissus*. The Turks say that the red rose is coloured with the blood of *Mahommed*, and they will never let one die upon the ground. In certain districts of Italy red roses are considered an omen of early death, and it is an evil omen to scatter their leaves upon the ground. "To smell the savour of red roses is good and wholesome for the brain, but the smell of a white rose is ill," says an old book of the fifteenth century; and elsewhere it is written, "To smell a red rose is good, but to smell a white rose is evil;" and it is a noticeable fact that the essential oil of red roses is astringent and tonic, while that of white roses is lowering and laxative. In Germany, if a white rose blossoms in autumn, it is said to denote an early death of a member of the household; if a red rose, a speedy marriage. The Persians hold that upon a certain day of the year the rose has a golden heart, and fortunate indeed will be the discoverer. A legend runs that the thorn-crown of Christ was made from the briar rose, and that the drops of blood which fell from His brow bloomed into roses. The origin of the blush imparted to the rose is beautifully expressed by Carey—

“ As erst in Eden’s blissful bowers,
Young Eve surveyed her countless flowers,
An opening rose of purest white
She marked with eye that beamed delight ;
Its leaves she kissed, and straight it drew
From beauty’s lips the vermeil hue.”

And again an old author (1602) says—

“ And I have heard that till this boy (Cupid) was borne,
Roses grew white upon the virgin thorne ;
Till one day, walking to a pleasant spring,
To learn how cunningly the birds did sing,
Lying him down upon a flowery bed,
The roses blushed and turned themselves to red,
The rose that blushed not for his great offence,
The gods did punish for his impudence—
They gave his doome, that was agreed by all,
The smell of the white rose should be but smalle.”

"The roses that in yonder hedge appear
Outdo our garden-buds which bloom within."
—JEAN INGELow.

JUNE

THE words that haunt me to-day are—

"The sweetest flower wild Nature yields,
A fresh-blown musk-rose; 'twas the first that threw
Its sweets upon the summer."

These were the words Keats wrote in praise of the coral and creamy blossoms that now are decking hedgerow and wood-side with their myriad of stars. The wild rose should indeed be a proud flower, for numberless are the endearing titles that have been bestowed upon it; and what poet, great or small, has left it unmentioned? It was Wordsworth's "Poet's Darling," it was Burns's "Sultana to the Nightingale," indeed, the queen of flowers to all our poets. They have sung its praise when its opening buds showed a coral jewel encased in an emerald setting; they have told us of its beauty when newly opened and sparkling with the diamond dew of morn; they have lauded it when its fallen petals embroidered the grass beneath. It is beautiful at all times, when it puts forth its new foliage in Spring until the winter-time, when its vermillion fruit is the jewellery of the hedge. Every spot where it chooses to climb it makes beautiful with a grace only their trailing branches have the power to do, and never do they look more lovely than when climbing about the gateway of some forgotten garden, peeping in upon its weed-filled alleys as though asking the passers-by to respect it still for the sake of its lost grandeur and the sacred memories it holds. Sisters to this wayside star are the sweet roses of our garden, number-

less in variety, elegantly formed, of many beautiful tints, and of endless shapes and sizes; but alas! to any one with a taste for the beautiful, too frequently are they vulgarly named. I love the old-world titles with which our forefathers named the inhabitants of the Rosarium; there were "Maiden's Blush," "The Cinnamon Rose," or "the rose smelling like cinnamon," as Gerard puts it; there was the "Rose of a hundred leaves," mentioned by Gerard in his "Herball" (1575), as "a certain plant growing about Philippi with an hundred leaves, which we hold to be the Holland Rose, that divers call the Province Rose, but not properly." I should dearly love to quote whole pages from these old books before me, and let you know what Parkinson, Culpepper, and Gerard have to say about the queen of flowers. It is sad that these old roses should be so despised; but such is the case, for often one comes across such a sentence as this about old roses: "The old reign of cabbage roses and China roses is over; they are seldom to be found except in old gardens, or cottage gardens."

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Love cherishes all sweet things in the heart long after they have vanished from sight; just as we may dream of the summer roses when we walk through the grey mists of winter. In my memory I have stored many a rose-idyll, each one filled with a sweet sadness, and as fragrant as a jar of pot-pourri, wherein are rose-leaves gathered in bygone summers, perfumed with the lavender of friendship, a lingering odour of rue—the rue of regret—and salted with many tears! In the western garden of twilight, see, the pink roses of sunset are blooming, letting their petals fall upon the old Manor garden, whose walks and lawns are overloaded with beautiful roses. In the twilight shadows a lonely bachelor,

the master of this fair domain, is walking. Now he stands awhile beside a bush of "Maiden's Blush"; the flowers, I know, bring the old, sad story more vividly before him, that has made his life what it is. They bring to him the vision of *her* face, whose cheeks were as fair as the leaves of these roses; it brings to him the time when these same blossoms were in their beauty, the time when the village was happy with the thought of a wedding—his wedding. The little street to the church was to be gay with garlands of roses. But the scene changes before him, and, instead of the chime of wedding bells, he hears the solemn toll; instead of nuptial garlands, there are pale blush roses upon a bier. Ah, well! a summer garden to many may seem a place only of happy dreams, but how many sad memories are clinging to its rose-arbours; there is always for some the rue of sorrow growing at the root of the traveller's-joy: intermingled are life's joys and sorrows, ever inseparable. Thus we pay the years their due, not only with smiles and merry laughter, not always with happy thanks, but often standing in a garden of grief we pay Time his due with the lilies of whitened faces, and red roses of weeping eyes! "Gather ye roses while ye may," Herrick bids us, yet roses gathered at morn with the dew upon them, we know by experience, last the longest. Morn-gathered roses, the joys of our youth, are the most lasting of all, because they are so often gathered with the dew of tears upon them. There is no rose without a thorn in any garden! In life's summer-land the tears upon our roses are soon dispelled, for Sadi tells us "A Rose-garden is no place of grief."

"I know a little garden-close,
Set thick with lily and with rose."

—WILLIAM MORRIS.

JUNE

OF this pretty plant—the thrift—that now is brightening many a garden walk with its tufts of blossom, John Parkinson in his "*Paradisi in Sole, Paradisus Terrestris*,"—a garden of pleasant flowers," tells us in his quaint manner, that it is used "more frequent to empale a border, a knot, because it abideth green winter and summer, and by cutting it may grow thicke, and be kept in what form one list. Well known unto all, many short and hard greene leaves . . . the stalkes are naked of leaves a spanne high, bearing a tuft of light purple or blush-coloured flowers standing round and thrusting together."

"A summer home of murmurous wings"

sang Tennyson of the bees among the limes ; and how fitting too are his words for this garden of thrift, wherein I walk to-day, in the light of opulent June. How the joyful bees revel in the mass of bloom ; what music they make as they gather their store of honey ; with what haste they fly from tuft to tuft, coming and going from hive to garden ! The very name of this plant is suggestive of tidiness and carefulness, so orderly seems to be the garden where it is grown. And, speaking metaphorically, would that the plant of thrift were grown more about our paths ; far better would be the accounts entered upon the pages of the Ledger of Time !

After a night of rain how fair glistens this garden of thrift in the dawn sunlight. The leaves of every plant are

crisp and full of life ; the peonies hang almost to the ground their rain-filled blooms. But the sun will soon kiss their tears away, bidding them gaze into his face. The last of the lilac was washed away in the heavy downpour ; the iris stands royally in purple array ; the flower-flames of poppies, rhododendrons, and azaleas leap from out the green of garden pathway and lawn-side. To my mind, amid all the bright array of June gardens, there is one tree, the guelder rose, that stands out the most beautiful of all, calling in a less conceited way for admiration. So pure, so fragile-looking are its globular flowers, each hanging from the branches by a delicate thread, like a child's Christmas-tree hung with snowballs for toys ! Over the many-coloured blooms flutter the butterflies—those "blossoms of the air" ; over all is heard the cheery twitter of the swallow. As I walk in this garden, in fancy I trace these words in thrift-flower letters : " Our moments of leisure should not be given up wholly to idleness, nor should we try how we can kill time, but rather how we may use the hours to their best advantage. Life is so short, there are so many beautiful things to consider, so much that is lovely to scan, so numerous the things to gather and treasure from good books. The chances of lost hours are never re-offered. Be thrifty with the hours ! " So speak the purple blossoms. The little thrift will soon, too soon, have spent its beauty, whose fading tells of flying summer and shortening days !

"A garden bower'd close
With plaited alleys of the trailing rose . . .
Crowned lilies, standing near
Purple-spiked lavender."

—TENNYSON.

JUNE

IN the "Christian Year" some of the tenderest, truest pictures of Nature are to be found, the beauties of each passing season scattered throughout its pages, if but briefly recorded in simple, homely words, are no less true. How beautifully this time of the year is expressed, when every

"Heart will bound to mark,
The full bright burst of summer morn,
Loves, too, each little dewy spark,
By leaf or flow'ret worn ;
Cheap forms, and common hues, 'tis true,
Though the bright shower-drop meet his view ;
The colouring may be of this earth,
The lustre comes of heavenly birth."

Wealthy indeed are the gardens with their newly-clothed branches and bright blooms, and very fair in their radiance in the clear light of a June morning, when the dew lies on the ruddy gold of the barberry blossoms, and weighing down the pure guelder roses, although soon will each snow-like cluster lift its head when the sun shall have relieved each star of its dewy burden. The *Lilium candidum*, crowned with its green calyxes, grows taller day by day ; the laburnum overflows with gold ; the wisteria, a most fair sight to behold, is draping the walls with its grape-like clusters of violet-purple flowers, shedding a sweet perfume upon the air. One of the garden's most conspicuous blossoms of each summer is the bright red of the Oriental poppy (*Papaver Orientale*), now to be seen in its beauty in many a wayside garden. Hugh Macmillan, in his

recently-published volume, "The Spring of the Day," writes very prettily of the poppy: "The scarlet poppy has a strange way of flowering. At first you see on the top of the stalk a round green ball. By-and-by this ball splits half open, and you see a red streak between the halves. This red streak increases, and at last opens altogether, and forms a round scarlet cup freely exposed to the sunshine. The two green leaves, called the calyx, that closed round it when it was in the bud, then fall off, and leave the stalk and the flower quite bare. The blossoms can now do without them. It needed them when it was young, to cherish it and protect it from the weather; and now it can manage for itself, and therefore it drops them, and you see them lying on the ground at the foot of the stalk—poor shrunken, withered leaves, while the blossom is flaunting its scarlet glory in the gay sunshine. The poppy, as you all know, is the flower of sleep and forgetfulness, and it acts according to its supposed nature in rejecting and forgetting what was once part of its life." How many have noticed this habit of the poppy?—almost the only flower to discard the guardian and protector of its tender youth.

"O'er garden-blooms, on tides of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms,
And bumps along the dusk."

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

JUNE

THE songs of day, the soft zephyr-music, the whisper of the leaves on the gently swaying branches, are all but hushed, now that the June daylight wanes fast away. The silvery twilight creeps with noiseless steps into the gay June garden, whose beds, lawn-sides, and pathways, are "a mosaic of nectared sweets." One almost feels the hush of the scented dusk as it creeps over the gables of the old house, and stirs the weather-worn vane, stealing into the open casement, draped with roses. The crested wrens, the white-throats, and yellow-hammers have finished their warbling, thrilling the soul of the sunlight with their songs, making the Canterbury-bells and the roses dance to the rhythm of their notes; the chiff-chaffs and chaffinches, too, sing merrily, making the orchard at the end of the garden echo their *chan-sonnettes*. They began their lays when

"Morn, her rosy steps in th' eastern clime,
Advancing sow'd the earth with Orient pearl."

But the strings of their golden lyres are slackened, and the black bat flits, now low over the bushes of syringa, now high over the lazy vane. When twilight falls, who does not love to watch the garden-world grow dim, the hour when the deep tints of the carnations deepen, when the white pinks grow violet, covered with evening's veil, their breath growing more fragrant moment by moment, until they are laid to rest in the garden's perfumed bed? The inmates of the garden were really tired, for to-day they were "At Home," and such a

number of visitors called. There were the butterflies, elegantly attired; numberless bees in black and gold; a few dragonflies honoured the garden with their presence, but for a very brief period; they care little to mix with the busy world, but love the quiet of home, amid rushes, reedmace, and water-lilies of the river. And I think also the bees would rather frolic amid the woodland blossoms, playing at hide-and-seek among the fingers and thumbs of the purple foxgloves. Larkspur and white lilies may be very lovely, rhododendrons and azaleas very aristocratic, syringa very bridal in appearance; but none of them so enchantingly beautiful as the foxgloves in their elfin home among the ferns on the margin of the woods. Around the yellow snapdragon—the humble bees' own flower—the moths are gathering, craving in vain for a sip of honey. The snapdragon is especially formed to be fertilised only by humble-bees; to all other insects its blossoms are closed, and it is joy to watch their lips part when visited by the favoured bee.

Night comes out above the garden with her lap full of stars, which she lets fall upon the violet fields, collecting them again before the dawn. What memories come to us at the hour when "the musk of the rose is blown"; thoughts both sweet and sad throng as we stand on the hushed brink of twilight in the land of eventide, while overhead

"Fair stars that crown a happy day
Go in and out as if at merrie play."

"The cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
Comes with the volleying rain and tossing breeze."
—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

JUNE

NATURE has donned her brightest robe; over all gleam
tranced skies and golden sunshine. The wealth of
flowers and many joyful birds make this month the most
blissful of the whole year. The fields—Nature's own garden
—are full to overflowing with floral gems. The watercourses
are bright with their own lovely order of plants. Foremost
are the blossoms of the water-crowfoot (*R. aquatilis*), whose
white petals bejewel the stream's breast as with pearls; among
the curious leaves of the arrow-head (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*)
will soon be glittering its blush-coloured blossoms. Two
other lovely aquatic plants now in bloom are the flowering
rush (*Butomus umbellatus*), sending up a towering stalk crowned
with its umbel of pink blooms, and the water-plantain (*Alisma
plantago*), its delicate-branched stalk of lilac petals making
bright the green growth of the stream. The forget-me-not
(*Myosotis palustris*), the best known and most prized of all
aquatics, is now in its beauty, and sweet it is to walk by
stream where the dragon-flies glitter among its blue blossoms
and emerald foliage, nourished by the kiss of the water.
Flowers of the stream, how symbolical you are! If we will
but see them, ever grow the flowers of joy in all the tearful
streams that flow through our lives! Still the days over-
flow with roses. How lovely they make the dawn, when,
filled with the silver tears of night, sweet with the morn's
caress, they send out their souls in a musky breath; the
world seems less sin-filled when we see such works of
beauty peeping from out their arbour homes, waving upon

their standard stems in lawn-land, or greeting our outgoing and incoming at the door.

Like saints arrayed in pure white, standing in stately order beside the garden pathway, the lilies bow majestically in the breeze, as though in lowly homage to Queen Summer. The snowy-breasted swallows have been our visitors for some time, and now the martin, one of the latest of our migrants to appear, is with us.

THE MARTIN

Bird, last to come and first to go,
Twin to the morn's thy name's sweet word,
Thou comest when the gay flowers blow,
Bird.

Thou com'st not when bleak winds are heard
Of March, nor when Spring's rain-drops glow ;
By thee are sun and flowers preferred.

After the days of cherry-snow
The foam-flowers greet thee ; we have erred
Who chide thee for delaying so,
Bird.

When Summer flowers pay us their welcome visit they never forget to bring with them some message from the dear dead summers long passed. To-day I pause beside a clump of columbines, for they have brought such a sweet message from a summer long ago. As I gaze upon them, life's sweet peace comes back to me ; I remember their name is derived from *columba*, a dove, because of the fanciful resemblance of its blossom to a nest of doves. Again in thought I stand amid heather dappled with clumps of purple columbines on the southern coast. I can see a vast stretch of calm sea like the floor of a vast cathedral inlaid with slabs of transparent

blue, olive, and pale green—the sea's own tints of green—grey and pale rose marbles. I know that to-day the same old sea gleams as it did then, and happy hearts are walking amid the columbines on those same high cliffs, dreaming their happy dreams in the "Sweet o' the Year."

Open to the morning light,
Called back from the dreams of night,
Swaying on thy leafy stem,
Crowned with dewy diadem ;
Summer's Monarch, Queen of flow'rs,
Light of all the golden hours !

Rose, I love thee, 'tis because,
Me, thy beauty to thee draws ;
Loveliness is shrined in thee,
Every charm in unity
Mingles, till its mingling shows
Beauty blushing in the rose.

Flower of love, I gather thee,
Be ambassador for me ;
Take with thee my fond caresses,
Go and grace my lady's tresses,
And within her tender eyes,
Let sweet visions of me rise.
Sweetest flower, I gather thee,
Be ambassador for me !

"A garden is earth's hymn of praise to heaven,
Sung every season in some changing tune,
Whose chords are colours, and whose odours sweet
Are tender symphonies."

—ALAN ESTMERÉ.

JUNE

THE golden ways of the year's loveliest month are merry
with bird melodies, the woods are very

"Aisles of bud and whitethroat song."

The copse and meadow by which I pass along, and the way-side hedges are fragrant and gay with fumitory, the pretty bladder-campion and ragged-robin. But it is in the quiet of the June-tide eve that I love to saunter past the cottages, for it is there such happy pictures are formed in the homely gardens and at the thresholds. I pass a garden fair with all its wealth of old-world flowers, and sitting there beneath a bower of olive-tinted foliage of the jasmine, ready to open the fragrant hearts of its ivory stars, are two lovers. They are speaking no words, for deep in their eyes is love's own magic language. One happy morn next month, when 'twill be sweet July, the little church nestling amid the trees will be bright with a village wedding, for these two will be made one. How bright, how fair the new life dawns for them! He is steady, and good, and strong, and she as thrifty a wife as one could wish to find. And how comfortable they are going to make the old folk!

Around another garden two old folk are wandering, standing now and again beside some favourite bed of blossoms. "What does this mind ye of, lass?" I hear him say to her at his side, as they stand by a bed of fair white blooms, and

as she looks up into his face I catch her reply—"Ay, lad, it's many a year ago since you plucked the same sweet flowers for the bouquet I carried on our wedding morn, done up they were into the prettiest nosegay that ever a bride carried. Ay, ours was a pretty wedding!" "And this," he asks, standing by a clump of peonies, "ye can call to mind, lass?" "Surely, John," she whispers, "it calls to mind the scarlet coat of our laddie; they were in bloom the day he came to bid us good-bye before he sailed for India." Her voice falters, the tears course down their cheeks, as side by side in the twilight they face the crimson west, thinking of a grave far away across the billows beneath the waving palms.

Some few yards down the road is the picture of home perfected, merry with earth's holiest music—the voice of a child. Mother and lassie, a pretty, blue-eyed mite, are waiting for father to return home from toil in the neighbouring town. The little mite has pleaded to stay up "only just to say good-night to dada," and to give the tired toiler his good-night kiss. Ah, the charm of a child's kiss! I picture the little lassie's tiny arms encircling her father's neck, his toil forgotten for awhile in that lingering kiss; and the verse of a poem I had read somewhere comes to my memory, called "Children-kisses"—

"Children-kisses, fresh and sweet as dawn-born roses,
From velvet lips of gold-haired laddies, laughing misses;
Who can count the wealth enshrined, in what encloses
Children-kisses?"

Idylls of love! Heaven's own pictures!

These homely scenes, always suggestive of peace for which so many crave, are the lungs through which we may

breathe the air of another world. They are the steps of the ladder by which we may climb there. Still may be found these scenes "not wholly in the busy world, nor quite beyond it." My heart is filled with happiness, my brain weaves pleasant fancies born of these pictures painted by the hand of evening as I wander homewards in the lingering light of June.

Fall shadows cool
On slumbering pool,
The golden sunbeams muster
Upon the breast
Of lake, where rest,
Lilies in snowy cluster.
Come row with me,
By vale and lea,
By green and verdant meadows,
'Neath arching trees,
Where cool the breeze,
Plays 'mid the dancing shadows.

Noon-weary bird
Hath song deferred
Until the sun's declining ;
Soon in the west,
To tell of rest,
The eve-star will be shining.
By leafy shore,
Come, dip the oar,
The noontide silence breaking ;
Wait not till light
Hath taken flight,
And eventide be waking.

"In the still dead heat of a drowsy day,
By sleeping lilies that lie astray
In the garden of grace."

—ARTHUR REED ROPES.

JULY

Come out, for the sky it is all of blue,
The fields they are full of song ;
The gold sunbeams still are wet with dew,
The morning hours stay not long.
We will taste the sweets of the morning light,
By the stream where the blue flow'r blows,
For the world has forgotten the dark of night,
The land with a radiance glows !

Is there ever a month like sweet July ?
Is there ever a day with so blue a sky ?
Grows there ever a rose with so fair a hue ?—
Come out, for the world wants only you !

I'll match your eyes with the flower of blue,
That down by the river grows ;
I'll match your cheek with the tender hue,
That lies on the open'd rose.
And our love shall be one as the earth and sky,
And our hearts full of happy song ;
Come out, for the morning is passing by,
Sweet July delays not long !

Is there ever a month like sweet July ?
Is there ever a day with so blue a sky ?
Grows there ever a rose with so fair a hue ?—
Come out, for the world wants only you !

**" More than a Pleasaunce is a garden-plot :
No playground merely, nor sequestered Grove ;
Gardens have been, since man's primæval lot,
The scene of Thoughts on which the Ages move."**
—CLIFFORD HARRISON.

"A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot."

—H. F. BROWN.

JULY

WITH July the long days of

"Summer with sweet hours"

are born. Fresh and fair it awakens from its short slumber. Over the sundawn summer garden the opal mists are spread, lying calm and still, and it is here that the birth of the day first becomes visible; the wind bears the happy message to the scented shadowy ways of the garden filled with dew-scattered blossoms. The hollyhocks gracefully wave their towering spikes, the lilies tremble with joyous emotion. The morning breeze hastens its glad news, making the distant popped wheat rustle, and its breast like to a sea heaving with emerald wave. Never more fair than at morn are meadow and hedge-bank with the newly-opened stars of mallow and musk-mallow, white and pale pink yarrow, tufted purple vetch, and meadow vetchling. Everywhere is beauty: each flower, each tiny drop of dew adds its loveliness; marigolds glittering by cottage doors; pure white lilies guarding peaceful paths; shy jasmine gathering courage, its twinkling white stars wooing radiance from the dawn, lighting its heaven of green leaves; and so beauty passes through the world until the hour of sundown, when the long day wanes. Over the sundown meadows, fragrant with new-mown grass, the swallows gather, and insects on the wing glitter like tiny specks of luminous gold in the air, as they gather in clusters along the river side, where now blossom the yellow flag amid

many graceful grasses and pale purple valerian. Dim grow those distant acres, scarlet with the blossom of bean, and the air is full of the souls of flowers, which is their perfume, as the night-time silence creeps over the world, and the only sound is the merry chirp of the cricket in the sun-warmed wall.

"O my garden, full of lilies, white as peace, and very tall."

—PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

JULY

THE light of kindling blossoms and the grateful shade from leafy trees give solace to the hot July days. Gardens now are blooming to perfection, and there are

"Roses, roses, everywhere."

The mulleins, larkspurs, and foxgloves seem to be running a race in their upward growth; but the hollyhocks overtop each of them, their beautiful stems rising so majestically from the thick greenery of their root-leaves.

"Heaven's breath smells wooingly here"

in the garden, among the waving poppies, sweet peas, and mignonette. The breath of heaven is sweet, too, in the meadows, where by the river is waving the meadow-sweet; and, climbing every hedge, making ways golden with its blossoms, the honeysuckle scents the air. The brightness of the blossoms of rhododendrons and azaleas have passed away, and now the nemophila makes the garden gleam with its blue flowers, and a delightful contrast to its vivid colour is the tender shade of the red valerian. Nor must we forget the old-time tints, telling of the presence of Canterbury-bells and campanulas, sweet-williams, and "lad's-love." With them intermingle the golden-red stars of the

"Marigold that goes to bed wi' the sun
And with him rises weeping; these are flowers
Of middle summer."

The dear old *Lilium martagon* is in its beauty, sending up its spike of wax-like bells ; nor does any summer garden seem to be complete without the clusters of pure white flowers of *Lilium candidum*. In many gardens about here I have noticed the blue tint on the sea-eryngo, but never have I seen it in any garden growing so beautiful as it does in its native place among the bugloss and yellow-horned poppies on the cliffs by the sea : it is there one sees it to perfection. Although it be far from, and out of, its native element, it is right that we should grow it about our paths, for often the sight of it must bring to us the sound of the murmuring sea, and the faces of friends whose acquaintance we made some time of holiday, and in fancy we feel the salt sea-spray upon our lips ! The limes are glorious with their pale-golden honey-filled blossoms ; their branches are musical with the sound of bees. In the hot July noon their shade is very acceptable, and when the breeze gently stirs the leaves, they seem to be wooing us to indulge in a brief siesta in the scented shadow, surrounded by poppies, those flowers of slumber ! But how brief is the beauty of kindling flowers of summer gardens !

When once in some season of summer our garden is all that we desire it should be ; when our flowers blossom just as we would have them, and, after their beauty has passed, how great is our desire, how many our hopes that such another garden will bless our autumn toil and crown the patience of winter, in the summer next to dawn ; but our gardens can never be twice alike. So it is with our pleasures : they never return to us in the manner in which they first came to us. There will come many days filled with joys, just as new summers will fill gardens with beautiful flowers : but as our gardens in the past seem always to have held something better

LILIES AND LARKSPUR.

than the gardens of the present, so past joys seem like the never-returning blossoms grown in the gardens of yester-year! But now that the wealth of July fills our gardens with flowers, let us revel in the delights they afford us.

Wake ! O zephyr of morn,
Softly in the dawnlight born ;
Gently touch the leafy trees,
Tender, fragrant, summer breeze,
Scattering laughter everywhere
With a kiss of sweetness rare,
Wooing meadow-blossoms fair.

Over the meadows dew-impearled,
Where the dawn flowers are unfurled,
Hastening over sunlit leas,
Merry, merry, summer breeze.

Gently, calmly, breeze of night,
Die away in sweet delight.
Now the sunlight doth forsake
All the world, and stars awake.
Daylight pauses on night's verge,
Into night the eve doth merge,
Softly sighs the stream a dirge.

Stars are born—night's diadem ;
Leafy trees sing requiem,
At the eventide for thee,
Softly, sweetly, tenderly !

"Rose and passion-flower grown in a careful garden in the sun."

—ROBERT BUCHANAN.

JULY

'TIS Midsummer in the garden and loveliness everywhere !
As I look from the window upon the many tints of the blossoms, a first thought is of the pleasures that they give us ; and this delight was never more tenderly expressed than by Wordsworth when he wrote :

" So fair, so sweet, withal so sensitive ;—
Would that the little flowers were born to live
Conscious of half the pleasures that they give."

Robinson, in one of his delightful books—"Alpine Flowers"—says: "A garden is a beautiful book. Every flower and every leaf is a letter. You have only to learn them—and he is a poor dunce that cannot, if he will, do that—to learn them and join them, and then go on reading and reading, and you will find yourself carried away from earth by the beautiful story you are going through. You do not know what beautiful thoughts grow out of the ground and seem to talk to a man. And then there are some flowers that seem to me like over-dutiful children: tend them ever so little, and they come up and flourish, and show us, as I may say, their bright and happy faces." But flowers are not the only garden pleasures; there are the birds—

" These birds have joyful thoughts.
Think you they sing
Like poets from the vanity of song ?
Or have they sense of why they sing ?
And would they praise the heavens for what they have ? "

IN GARDEN TIME.

asks Tennyson. There are other Nature pleasures besides birds and flowers to be found in scenes beyond the garden : in the clouds and shadows and distant July trees. Alice Meynell says in one of her exquisite essays : " The daylight trees of July are signs of common beauty, common freshness, and a mystery familiar and abiding as night and day. . . . One has the leisure of July for perceiving all the differences of the green of leaves. It is no longer a difference in degrees of maturity, for all the trees have darkened to their final tone, and stand in their differences of character and not of mere date. Almost all the green is grave—not sad and not dull. It has a darkened and a daily colour, in majestic but not obvious harmony with dark grey skies." And again of the shadows she says : " Shadows within doors are yet only messages from that world of shadows which is the landscape of sunshine. . . . The trees show you a shadow for every leaf, and the poplars are sprinkled upon the shining sky with little shadows that look translucent. The liveliness of every shadow is that some light is reflected into it ; shade and shine have been entangled as though by some wild wind through their million molecules." Pleasures everywhere, as wonderful as in Swinburne's lordly " July Carol " :

" Hail ! proud July, whose fervent mouth
Bids even be morn and north be south,
By grace and gospel of thy word,
Whence all the splendour of the sea
Lies breathless with delight in thee."

" . . . A garden full of bees,
Large drooping poppies, and Queen hollyhocks,
With butterflies for crowns."

—JEAN INGELOW.

JULY

"A SUMMER burial deep in hollyhocks." Was there ever a line more exquisitely worded than this one of Tennyson's? Such a number of thoughts seem to be crowded into that one line, telling us that when the hollyhocks shall have ceased to bloom, Summer will have been buried with all its sweet delights. Even now, as I write, the first faint sign of approaching Autumn is upon the garden, more especially upon the fallen golden leaves of the limes. In many a garden at the present time the hollyhocks are sending up their tall spikes of rosette-like blossoms of many glowing colours. Little seems to have been said about this delightful old inhabitant, and the glory of many a garden. Shakespeare never once mentions it, strange to say, although it is mentioned as early as the thirteenth century. To repay a tireless search for information on this flower which I so love, I find it mentioned in a vocabulary as *holihoc*, while the French in the fifteenth century called it *hoc*; the Saxons named it *ymale*. Sad it seems to say, that year by year it is growing into greater disfavour, and in many districts it has quite given up its struggle for existence, owing to the blight which has of late years attacked it—a virulent little fungus, bred, it is supposed, in the leaves and stems of the marsh-mallow and kindred plants. John Parkinson, writing of this flower in his "Paradisus in Sole," says, in his quaint manner: "Hollihockes, single and double of severall colours. The stalkes sometimes growe like a tree, at least, higher than any man, with divers

such divided leaves on them, and flowers from the middle to the toppe . . . the flowers are of divers colours, as pure white and pale blush almost like a white, and more blush, fresh and lively, of a rose colour, scarlet, and a deeper red like a crimson, and of a darke red like black bloud." Gerard, in his "Great Herball," says: "Of the garden mallow called hollihocke. The tame or garden mallow bringeth forth broad leaves of a whitish greene colour, rough and greater than those of the wild mallow. The stalk is straight, of a height of fower or sixe cubits, whereon doe growe upon slender foot stalkes single flowers . . . now and then of a deep purple colour, varying diversely as Nature list to play with it."

Like many another plant, such as the foxglove, the hollyhock flowers from the bottom of the stem upwards, and it is quite noticeable how carefully Nature orders their manner of blossoming—as soon as the lower blossoms have faded new ones open above them. So it is with our joys: they seldom come to us all at once, but when one is dead, another takes its place!

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There is a sweet old garden by the river, that in July and early August is lit with the radiant blossoms of the towering hollyhocks. It is there that the boats stop, and the rowers, weary with rowing, rest in its cool arbours. There is laughter light and silvery, I know, throughout these summer days, filling that garden, of happy maidens and boatmen, their voices blending with the laughter that comes through the trees from the old lock lower down the river. For years and years that dear old garden has been bright with its hollyhocks at summer-time, and its arbours wreathed with roses and starry clematis. Every year come

happy lovers with the same unaltered innocent laughter, the same bright dreams for the future filling their hearts. To how many (when the time they lingered in that garden was long ago) from that spot a wind

“Blows with a perfume of songs and of memories,
By the meadows of memory and the highway of hope !”

while in a dream they stand as in the past by the sundial, lovers hand in hand together, reading the motto engraven round it, the shadow of the gnomon telling of unreachd noon. So full of hope, such words of consolation for all the trials and sorrows that must surely be theirs ere the dusk of evening fell o'er life's dial in that simple motto—“In Heaven is Rest.”

“‘Thou sentest a gracious rain upon Thine inheritance;
and refreshedst it when it was weary.’ The whole
garden is singing this hymn of praise.”

—GERTRUDE Jekyll.

JULY

HOW oppressively hot some of the past days have been !

“Oh, tyranny of Summer ! Oh, to feel
No respite from the insatiable desire
That burns this blissful and impassion’d earth
With fierce, perennial fire ;
Pulsing through ev’ry ruby-hearted rose,
Running, more swiftly than the streamlet flows,
In human veins, till human veins reveal
Its glory on the lyre !”

If the freshness of leaf is over, and the newness gone
from field, there is beauty in the garden. It was a joy to
behold the Maytime fields and see

“Tides of grass break into foam of flowers.”

But the green of the young leaf matures with all too great a
haste to the gold of the old one. If May and June be the
time when field and hedgerow are glorious, for the garden is
the time of July. Some of the sweetest of blossoms to-day
in the garden are the fairy-like sweet peas. Did not Keats
very happily describe them?—

“Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight ;
With wings of gentle flush o’er delicate white
And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about in tiny rings.”

“On tip-toe for a flight” is the very term for these butterfly-
like flowers. I take the following lines on the July garden
from “A Garden of Pleasure”: “The garden is more

fragrant this month even than is its wont. One cannot tell which sweet scent does most prevail, whether that of sweet peas, or mignonette, or honey-scented alyssum. The sweet pea hedge is full of lovely caprices of colour. One set of white blossoms is tinged with pale bluish. . . . Plain white is, after all, the best, perhaps. Nature never planned a lovelier flower of such airy lightness. It might shake its butterfly wings and fly, it is so lightly poised upon the slender stalk! Perhaps the name 'sweet pea,' and to the sweet freshness of the flower, memories of childhood cling more closely than to any other garden name."

"A crimson bower the garden glows
In overhanging noon."

—GEORGE E. WOODBERRY.

JULY

I LOVE my garden best in the dawn-tide of July. One must be up betimes if he would know the whole meaning of Tennyson's beautiful lines in the saddest of his lyrics, "Tears, Idle Tears":—

"Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds."

It were as vain as looking for branches of delicate apple-blossoms in an Autumn garden ravaged by rain and filled with blown leaves and broken boughs, as for one to listen at noon or eve for the singular beauty of the birds' notes heard only in "dark summer dawns." As soon as a faint light appears in the east the "earliest pipe" is heard: first the single note of a bird comes softly from a distant tree, then there is a brief hush which is broken by more than one bird-voice; and these are the first indications of

"The opening eyelids of the morn."

As the brightness grows, and the beauty of field and wood, hidden by night's veil, becomes clearer, the music of the birds increases, until a full chorus greets the moment when the cloud-bars across the sky's eastern gate are unfastened and the sun arises in all its glory! Listening in the hush of early morn, the harmonies of the birds' songs seem truly wonderful; and never, we believe, have they altered their songs with which they heralded the first dawns of the world from the dewy boughs of Eden.

How sweet it is at this dawn-hour to walk where the world is quiet save for Nature's own music; how many are the charms to discover in a half-mile walk! Who can describe them fully? Who can paint in colours or describe in words the sparkle of the silver dew upon the golden dandelion and the emerald fern, beneath ripening seed, intermingled with opening and opened blossoms upon the hedge? The fields, it is true, are shorn of their waving grasses and blossoms, and are fast preparing for an aftermath; but along their sides we may find the blue flowers of the chicory and harebell, the white heads of fragrant yarrow, and the coral-pink stars and delicate foliage of the musk-mallow. There is a tender beauty and a world of charm in the appearance of the time-worn and moss-mosaicked stones of the old bridge, and there are such dreams to dream as one stands upon it in the quiet dawn, listening to the song of the stream rippling below among the green rushes and pale blossoms of the water-plantain, and the osiers fast reddening beside the stream. Over the bridge in the early dawn go the travelling harvesters to seek for toil in the neighbouring fields, sunburnt and bent; onward they go, tired man and weary woman; at their side a lassie with so sad a look upon her little face as though she never knew the true meaning of youth, who never knew the love of a playmate, whose playthings in babyhood were but the purple and white clover blossoms. Very sweetly sings the cornfield's chorister above the ripening grain, telling to heaven of earth's thankfulness for the new-born day in its wild, glad music. Sad it is that amid the light and beauty and song of harvest dawn there should be cast the shadow of sorrow, and that the sign of poverty and penury should be heard—known and felt by these travelling harvesters! Even in the midst

of the plenteous harvest-field there comes the cry for bread !

As I pass along in the bright dawn of this last day of July how fair stretch before me the fields of rustling, whispering wheat, almost ready for the sickle, where

“ The tall wheat, coloured by the August fire ”

speaks of

“ The fulfilment of the year's desire.”

"One rich hollyhock warden
High in the midsummer garden."

—GEORGE E. WOODBERRY.

JULY

FAST the Summer is hurrying away, yet she hides with
almost her first sweetness in many spots, especially

In English Summer lanes,—the loveland of the breeze,
Where golden sun-shafts and the silver rains
Fall on the wild-rose stars, thro' full-leaved, arching trees ;
In English Summer lanes.

Bird-haunted, too, for hear their varying strains
From tree-crest, mossy bole,—a lane of melodies.
Oh dear, indeed, these feathered choirs' refrains.

Ah, could this beauty stay ! but Summer surely flees
With all its sweet delights to other plains,
To give them of her joys—nor stays for all our pleas
In English Summer lanes.

The richest odour of flowers is on the air to-day in the
wild-rose lanes : it is the scent of the overblown lime. Over
the fields is wafted the perfume of the hay, and the sound
of scythes is heard. Yonder, over the field of tall-growing,
poppy-gemmed wheat, a seemingly never-ending song from
the lark sends its

"Wild voice pealing up to the sunny sky."

In this fast-flying Summer month, sweet indeed are

"Garden sights and sounds, since intermits
Never the turtle's coo, nor stays nor stints
The rose her smell."

Richard Jefferies has written nothing better than "The

July Grass"; it is an essay to be remembered as we walk between the wild-rose hedges; therein he says: "A July fly went sideways over the long grass. His wings made a burr about him like a net, beating so fast they wrapped him round with a cloud. Every now and then, as he flew over trees of grass, a taller one than common stopped him, and there he clung, and then the eye had time to see the scarlet spots—the loveliest colour—on his wings . . . I wonder whether it is a joy to have bright scarlet, spots, and to be clad in the purple and gold of life? Is the colour felt by the creature that wears it? The rose, restful of a dewy morn, before the sunbeams have topped the garden wall, must feel a joy in its own fragrance, and know the exquisite hue of its stained petals. The rose sleeps in its beauty." In that wholly delightful book, "Days and Hours in a Garden," these following lines on the wild rose are prettily told: "Among the pleasant sights of Summer-tide, perhaps the pleasantest of all, is the thicket of wild roses. . . . The east, shining full upon it every morning, brings forth hundreds of new-blown roses. Very often as you pass into their sweet presence, the air is redolent of a subtle perfume—not always, though, not every day, for roses are capricious of their scent. The yellow-stamened centre of each flower glows like a tiny lamp of gold, and the soft petals surrounding it are rose-pink of the tenderest dye. Were these the canker-blooms of Shakespeare? If so, and if in his day they could be said to 'live unwooded, and unrespected die,' surely now the tide has turned, for the wild rose is beloved of all."

“Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen
Geh’ ich im Garten herum.”

—HEINE.

JULY

WHAT a wealth of flowers line the river’s margin. I never see them but what a verse of Omar Khayyam’s comes to mind—

“And this reviving Herb, whose tender Green
Fledges the River’s Lip on which we lean ;
Ah ! lean upon it lightly ! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen !”

In “The Sowers” is to be found the following passage about rivers: “Men travel far to see a city, but few seem curious about a river. Every river, nevertheless, has its individuality, its great silent interest. Every river has, moreover, its influence over the people who pass their lives within sight of its waters. Thus, the Guadalquivir is rapid, mysterious, untrammelled. . . The Nile, the River of Ages, running clear, untroubled, through the centuries, between banks untouched by man. The Rhine, romantic, cultivated, artificial. . . . The Seine and the Thames, shallow, shallow, shallow. And we—who live upon their banks !” There is a river which winds through the

“Fields near home ;
Where the fire-flowers blow,
And flowers of snow”

—poppies and marguerites—that wave in the fields along its banks. From my earliest remembrance I have grown familiar with those blossoms whose

“Tender green
Fledges the River’s Lip.”

Long before I discovered their names I knew them by some

title of my own choosing. To-day the sparkling Summer river lies in the bright clasp of the sunlight, and many a lane leading to it is littered with gold and silver threads fallen from the hay-cart. The pleasant odour that is wafted from the newly-mown meadows owes much to the sweet-scented vernal grass, whose grateful perfume is so near akin to sweet woodruff (*Asperula odorata*) now making with its panicles of blossoms white patches upon the "river's lip." This last-named flower was a great favourite with those folk who in past times delighted in placing sweet-smelling herbs, such as lavender and rosemary, in their linen presses. This was a very pleasant custom, but it has long since died out, and was one which shows, to my thinking, that in those days housewives loved a sweetly-scented atmosphere in their rooms, and had in consequence sweeter minds and more gentle ways! Other flowers which call for special notice are the tall and stately teasel (*Dipsacus sylvestris*), queen of the meadows, common gipsy-wort, brook-lime, and money-wort. Of grasses we may discover the handsome reed canary grasses—a variety of that cultivated and found in most gardens, and best known as ribbon grass—others, for their grace, are the floating meadow grass, reed meadow grass, and water whole grass.

But summer is fast bearing away many a favourite blossom whose stay we would fain prolong. Madam Sarah Grand, in one of her books, wrote a pretty passage on this flower-love, which each of us own in some measure: "We do not leave a taste for flowers behind us with our toys. If we like flowers as children, we love them as men. The taste develops like a talent when we cultivate it. To love flowers with true appreciation of their affinities in regard to certain persons is an endowment, a grace of Nature, which bespeaks the most absolute refinement of the mind."

"As for marigolds, poppies, hollyhocks, and valorous sunflowers, we shall never have a garden without them, both for their own sake and for the sake of old-fashioned folk who used to love them."

—HENRY WARD BEECHER.

"God the first garden made . . .
Who that has reason and his smell,
Would not among roses and jasmines dwell?"
—COWLEY.

AUGUST

Soon the Summer will be over,
Dead leaves dewy meadows cover ;
Opal mists are thinly creeping
Where soon roses will be sleeping.
Roses red and butterflies,
Golden days and azure skies,
Murmuring streams and whispering trees,
Filmy clouds o'er flow' red leas,
Soft, rose-incense-laden breeze—
Sing a requiem for these.

Good-bye to Summer, with light and the roses,
Farewell to joys that each sweet day encloses ;
Hark ! now the song of the stream as it flows is,
"Requiem."

All things lovely will be faded
In a land by death invaded ;
All things lately lit with glory,
Lifeless, leafless, grey and hoary.
Blithe birds swinging on the spray,
Singing through each long bright day
Glad and golden melodies.
Sparkling waves and foam-set seas,
Sweet with mermaids' silvery glees,—
Sing a requiem for these.

Good-bye to Summer, with light and the roses,
Farewell to the joys that each sweet day encloses ;
Hark ! now the song of the wind as it blows is,
"Requiem."

**"Still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,
And still a Garden by the Water blows."**

—OMAR KHAYYAM.

"Apple and peach trees fruited deep,
Fair as a garden of the Lord."

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

AUGUST

The lark leaves the ling, and the silver-bright dawn-dew
is shaking,
On earth, as to heaven it rises, from lightest and blith-
est of wing ;
By the edge of the cliff the August-morn waves soft are
breaking,—
The lark leaves the ling.

How sweet is the anthem, O bird, thou of the sun-dawn
dost bring,
O'er leagues dyed with purple of ling thy gladdest of
songs thou art making,
Each cadence and burden in every heath-bell doth re-
echo and ring.

The morning is thine and the noon, all the hours till the
light is forsaking
Leagues lately all golden with whin whose soft honey
odour did cling
To these slopes by the sea, where amid the fair light of
the morning now awaking,
The lark leaves the ling.

—(AUGUST MORN.)

SUMMER'S glorious pageant is quickly passing away from
view, and to follow in its train is Autumn's gay proces-
sion. Woods and hedgerows are fast visibly preparing to don
their glorious robes ; many of the berries, especially those of
the hawthorn and roses, are swelling to ripeness,—berries that
in winter are the "coral jewellery of the hedge." Summer at
present is by no means lessened in beauty : in the fields the
bees still hum as merrily as ever over the white of blossoming

clover ; on the borders of the rushy river, among the tall and stately flowers and reeds, now at the zenith of their beauty and gracefulness, the dragon-flies silently hover ; over the tall golden and silver umbels of many of the *umbelliferæ*, sulphur-coloured butterflies and gaily painted insects creep, while from the limes the tufts of faded winged blossoms fall whirling to earth in the dazzling sunlight ;—these and a thousand and one little insignificant instances which go towards the making of Summer one notices, each in itself a perfect picture, a world of wonder.

In this hot breathless day my thoughts often turn to the cool cliffs by the sea, where so many of our most beautiful British flowers are now to be found. Some of them would indeed be welcome additions to our inland gardens if they would but grow in their own natural way, very perfections of loveliness. There is the beautiful Dyer's rocket (*Reseda luteola*), the pretty milkwort (*Polygala vulgaris*), and the scentless mignonette (*R. lutea*), that love to hide or nestle among the heaths and ling, now at their best, and none of the latter are more beautiful than *Erica tetralix*.

It is joy to walk by the sea in these calm days, whose quietness is but a prelude to the stormy hours that are waiting not far distant ; to watch the grey gulls hover over the white foam-fringe of the incoming tide, or to walk by the sea-gardens where gaudy butterflies with glittering wings frolic amid the bright lobelia !

"I love my garden . . . It makes one very humble to see oneself surrounded by such a wealth of beauty and perfection 'anonymously' lavished."

—ELIZABETH AND HER GERMAN GARDEN.

AUGUST

THE place of our sojourn this year by the sea was an ideal little spot—

"All sand and cliff and deep inrunning cave."

And these words of Tennyson's give a very true description of the shores around the peaceful village on the coast, with its little white cots above the golden stretch of sand, sunning themselves in the pure sunlight, sparkling in the clear air. It was an ideal spot for a peaceful sojourn; it is a fair picture to conjure up in the Autumn twilight. How often will steal back to my memory that little village by the sea, ever as vivid and as fair in colour and detail as a picture fresh from an artist's easel; its quaint street, each little fisher-homestead with its well-stocked garden of old-world flowers. But of these anon. High above the shore the white cliffs tower, the sea-gulls spread their white wings at the least sound, and drop into the blue dreamy waters like opals thrown from hands invisible. For lovers of flowers—one need not be a botanist to be this—a goodly store of cliff-plants might be found. There, on cliff-ledge and from crevice, the

"Little thrift
Trembling in perilous places o'er the deep,"

intermingling with the glaucous and aromatic leaflets of the samphire, that plant dearly loved by our forefathers as an

But the village itself had the greatest charm: ordered and exact in its life day after day, with its home-coming of the fishers at dawn, and the greetings in the little harbour down below; night after night the sailing out of the boats, merry voices down the dim streets at the hour when the stars were born above the foam. Besides a score of fisher-homesteads a shop or two comprised the village. From open doors might be seen hanging from rafters the tangle of nets, or wives at the thresholds mending the rends in them—the work of stormy nights. A source of great delight were the gardens, not so much for the sake of the flowers, but because of the quaint names bestowed upon the blossoms. Honesty was a favourite flower, named by the fishers as “Silks-and-satins”; loved chiefly by most of us for its curious seed vessels, which glimmer like threaded moonstones. (This likeness of mine was verified when I discovered that the meaning of its name *Lunaria*, referred to the shape and colour of the seed-vessels.) *Alyseum Maritimum* was known only by the name of “Snow-in-Summer,” and the golden toad-flax around the garden gates as “Roving sailor.” There the Virginia stock was “Pretty-and-little,” the saxifrage was “Meet-me-love,” and southernwood was not “Lad’s love,” nor “Old man,” but “Kiss me!” When the golden day of idleness was past, and the faint mists pierced by the sunset were rising o’er the sea, I watched the twilight fall, and the gulls on their large expanded wings go soaring home in graceful flight. No words could express the charm that filled my soul, the sense of peace and rest as the light died away, and night began to count her aves on her rosary of stars—stars, that some say are golden flowers the angels plant in the fields of night, to be reaped all too soon by the morn’s sickle of light.

"A golden insect hums aloft ;
A wind steals in, and whispers soft ;
To search the garden through and through."
—WHYTE MELVILLE.

AUGUST

Ere harvest reigns, and fields of gold
Resound with reapers' glad refrains,
Sweet August-land, what promise told
Ere harvest reigns !

A golden hand with furrow-veins
In many a spot seems to unfold,
Where poppies' crimson fire fast wanes.

Now gardens fewer roses hold ;
O'er drowsy hills and sleepy plains
The moon grows lustrous with gold
Ere harvest reigns !

SAVE for a few days of cold rain, the August-land at noon seems wrapped in sleep, and over all has fallen the silence that one notices before it is harvest. We are on the very verge of the gathering in of the corn, once the happiest, busiest time of the year, when the golden acres were cut with sickle and thrashed with flail. The last fairy bloom on the long stalk of the foxglove has just withered away, its beautiful purple has given place to the

"Lustre of the long convolvulus."

We are familiar with both of the convolvulus blossoms, *C. arvensis* and *C. sépium*—the latter of the hedges and the former gracefully trailing along the borders of the harvest fields and of a sweet fragrance. Each passing week the garden holds fewer roses, and to make up for their loss, those blossoms which herald in the Autumn make their appearance.

We are still "friends with the roses," and many a perfect bloom may yet be gathered.

Mentioning the rose brings back to memory two little incidents regarding the great statesman, Prince Bismarck, and this flower of flowers. It is said that after his death his daughter placed a white rose in his hand and scattered a few more over the body that none will see again. The other incident is worth recording, showing the great contrast which existed between the Bismarck of politics and the Bismarck of private life. I quote the words as they appeared: "In the home circle he was perfectly charming. . . . Once, when his gardener's little girl died, the great statesman went to condole with him. . . . He kissed the little corpse, and himself placed a bunch of roses in her hand." How much it reads like another version of Browning's beautiful "Evelyn Hope."

"The moon of Heaven is rising once again ;
How oft hereafter shall she look
Through this same Garden."

—OMAR KHAYYAM.

AUGUST

THE garden to-day tells me more than ever how fast the year is flying. Honey-heavy bees among the scabias, gay butterflies hovering everywhere are the charm and life of its walks to-day. It is so full of colour, the splendid colour of August, although the roses' beauty has passed from it, save for a solitary La France lingering here and there, and a pink-hearted tea-scented rose against the sunny wall. What bright patches of matchless colour, too, the zinnias make among the blue mist of the lobelia. There have been so many pleasurable things that made up the life of the garden, that it is hard to decide what they have been, or in which to centre one's admiration most. "How full of charm," says the author of "A Garden of Pleasure," "is the return after absence to a beloved garden ! In August one comes home rejoicing, to see with a fresh eye each dear tree and each familiar spot of lawn or border, and bringing home stores of pleasant memories with sweet suggestions for new delights, to perfect and bring to pass and make one's own another day."

Perhaps to some, the scene beyond the garden's boundary has formed a very tangible part of the garden's life, made up of twinkling lights from homesteads set amid far-off trees, and a thousand other sights and sounds each holding some individual charm. There is more than a mere friendship with familiar trees. Mrs. Meynell has written of them : "The daylight trees are signs of common beauty. . . . The

serious elm with its leaf sitting close, unthrilled. Its stature gives it a dark gold head when it looks alone to a late sun. But if one could go by all the woods, across all the old forests that are now meadow lands set with trees, and could walk a country gathering trees of a single kind in the mind, as one walks a garden collecting flowers of a single kind in the hand, would not the harvest be a harvest of poplars?" Perhaps the pines, because of their unchangeableness, are invested with a deeper sense of friendliness, for, says a writer, "The pine is one of the most majestic of all trees. It is so superbly stately—so unbending to the breeze. It raises its royal head aloft—soaring heavenwards heedless of all around, while the silver clouds seem to gently kiss its topmost boughs, as they fleet rapidly hither in their endless chase around the world. Deep and dark are the leaves, strong and unresisting; but even they have their tender points, and the young shoots are deliciously green and sweet-scented. Look at its solid stem—so straight, its superb carriage. . . . Look beneath, its dark and solid grandeur protects and fosters the tenderest of green carpets. See the moss of palest green, its fronds appearing like very ferns, or note those real ferns and coarser bracken fighting the brambles for supremacy, or trying to flout that little wild rose daring to assert its individuality." And perhaps, after all, the trees, near and distant, with their tender whisperings, and change from bud to fall, have added the greatest charm to our many pleasures to be found in the life of the garden.

"The shadows on the garden walk
Are frayed with rifts of silver light."

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

AUGUST

"The leaves caught gold against the sun,
Where the bluest air begun.
In the mute August afternoon
They trembled to some undertone
Of music in the silver air ;
Great pleasure was it to be there
Till green turned duskier, and the moon
Coloured the corn-sheaves like gold hair."

—SWINBURNE.

WHEN the dahlia reigns Queen of the garden, when the first notes of the robin are heard, sounding sweetly through the Autumn rain, it is then we know that Summer is merging into the mellow season. The hollyhocks have almost spent their fair blossoms; the apples are gleaming silvery-green and rosy-red amid the dark foliage. The asters, too, make gay the garden with their many-coloured and brilliant rosette-like blossoms; but the most charming flower that brings us back the visions of early Autumn is the aftermath of the wisteria. How its bunches of lilac blossoms scent the air, and, as we view it in the noon sunlight, we can hardly believe that it is the end of Summer!

The ending of Summer means orchard trees heavily laden with mellowing fruit, and to most of us the season of ripened seed—the end of every flower's mission. Regarding this last sentence Ruskin says—I think it is to be found in his "Proserpina"—"The flower exists for its own sake, not for the fruit's sake. The production of the fruit is an added honour—is a granted consolation to us for its death."

Quiet, and very gradual, is the change from one season to another; is there one of us able to tell the exact day when Winter leaves us? We only know that the cold is going, when the snowdrops thrust their spears through the hard earth, and when the violets in garden and by meadow-side perfume the lingering snow! After these two favourite flowers of Spring have faded, together with the golden stars of the primrose and lesser celandine, it is the unfolding of the rose and the return of the swallow that tell us that Summer has dawned. When the rose has shed its last petal and the swallow has thoughts of

“Flying, flying south,
Flying from the golden woods,”

and when stream-sides are almost flowerless and bereft of the glittering insects, and swaying in the wind and mist-heavy stand the teasel and rushes and osiers, we know that Autumn has come, bringing the snow and frost of Winter in its train!

Thus the year changes day by day, quietly, and almost unperceived; and as quietly as this change does Nature wind her affections about our hearts—not only drawing us to her side when she flings her beauties broadcast in Spring and Summer, but bidding us still follow her along the quiet ways of later Autumn, and through the flower-forsaken days of grey Winter-time!

"As to colour in gardens . . . I think the best and safest plan is to mix up your flowers, and rather eschew great masses of colour."

—WILLIAM MORRIS.

AUGUST

RICH colours are characteristic of this fast-closing month. Is there anything lovelier to be found in all the months of the year than a field of scarlet poppies? "See," says Leigh Hunt,

"how Heaven loves colour ;
How great Nature clearly joys in reds and greens."

Ruskin penned nothing more charming than when writing about colour in his note on poppies, to be found in those delightful papers of his on our wild flowers, "Proserpina," which most garden lovers know.

Applicable to an August dawn are Browning's lines to be found in "Pippa Passes":

"Day !
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim day boils at last :
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud cup's brim,
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid grey
Of the eastern cloud an hour away ;
But forth one wavelet, then another curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew old, then overflowed the world."

"Artistic and scientific gardening . . . no occupation is healthier ;
none is fuller of variety and interest."

—MORTIMER COLLINS.

AUGUST

THOUGHTS of Autumn come with the blossoming of
"the broad sunflower," now hanging its giant head in
many and many a garden. It was a fancy with the old poets
and some writers that the flower turned round with the sun,
as Thomson sang :

"The lofty flower of the sun,
Sad when he sets, shuts up her yellow leaves,
Drooping all night ; and when he warm returns,
Points her enamoured bosom to his ray."

The French called this flower *Grand soleil*, also *tournesol*, or
turn-sol, from the same vulgar error. Most probably the
germ of this belief in the diurnal movement of the sunflower
is found in the fable of Clytie, who was transformed into a
flower and doomed for ever to be rooted to earth, for ever
turning her impassioned gaze towards her adored Phœbus.

The sunflower, a native of Peru, first opened its petals in
Europe about the end of the sixteenth century, and by the
Peruvians it was used as a symbol in their religious festivals,
and the virgins who officiated in the temple of the Sun were
crowned with sunflowers wrought of pure gold. Gerard, in
his *Herbal*, describes it as "The Indian sunne or the golden
flower of Peru, a plant of such stature and talenesse, that in
sommer, being sowed of a seede in Aprill, it hath risen up to
the height of fourteen foote in my garden." Parkinson says :
"This goodly and stately plant, the golden flower of Peru,

or Flower of the Sunne, *Flos Solis*, wherewith every one is nowadays familiar, being of many sorts."

To-day many of the sunflowers in Nature's own wayside gardens open their golden petals. The dense growths of the banks literally sparkle with heads of ragwort (*Senecio Jacobæ*), and one may at times find the tall ploughman's spikenard (*Inula Helenium*); by riverside the fleabane also lights its clusters of golden suns, helping to swell the golden tint that welcomes Autumn.

"A garden must be looked unto and dressed, as the body."

—GEORGE HERBERT.

AUGUST

A DREAM of rest comes after the ceaseless hurry of Summer,

"When the Summer fields are mown,
When the birds are fledged and flown."

The past days of unrelenting sunshine, and the oft-time promises of rain unfulfilled, have made the Summer fields, shorn of their waving grasses and blossoms, patches of brown, burnt-up stubble, where the grasshoppers, merry throughout the noon hours, seem the only thing alive in the sleepy land. One now beholds the warm, rich tints of Autumn gradually creeping upon the foliage of tree and hedge, and the bracken, like a sea blown into ripples by the wind at play beneath the shadowy branches of the wood, is turning to many shades of brown. The floors of our "English short sweet lanes," are dappled with the mosaic from the shafts of sunlight escaping from between the dense foliage above, and here the bees seek the pearly pink bloom of the few lingering bramble blossoms.

Of the wild flowers to be found in late Summer, the most beautiful are the helleborines. Although by no means common, the helleborines are to be found in this corner of Middlesex; last week I found a perfect specimen of the Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactus latifolia*), sending up from its root three tall spikes of loose greenish-purple blossoms. Near to this I have found the Marsh Helleborine, of similar structure, whose beauty is so easily overlooked. These flowers are

a near relation to the orchid, several of which are also to be found in this district ; in cool shady garden-corners these charming blossoms may be tempted to grow, and are full of interest.

A feature of our moist hedges is the trailing moneywort (the creeping-jenny of cottage gardens) which keeps delightfully green and sprinkled still with its golden honey-scented flowers, friends with the scorpion-grass, or true forget-me-not. The burning hours of August work havoc in the garden, and although many of our flowers bravely try to withstand the drought, many succumb, leaving brown dead patches where but lately life and beauty reigned. But the garden of late Summer has a distinct beauty, with its opening, many-coloured asters, its clumps of ivory, rose-tinted and carmine phlox, and blossoming fragrant lavender.

“ Oh, fair is the first of the light, when flowers are odours
distilling,
And blithely awakens to song from the brief silence of
the night.
Each bird, as the darkness departs, the world with its
music is filling,
Oh, fair is the first of the light.

Swift up to the bright'ning sky goes the lark leaving
mead-mists white,
Its silvery carol of joy, its cadence of love it is spilling,
As the uprisen sun bids the dew from each bloom and
bud take flight.

On the morn-sea the glint of crisp waves, and there, on
the distant hill, ling
Empurples the slopes with its bells, all the distance from
foot to height ;
While the whisper of wind tells the joy that the older
hours of the day will bring,—
Oh, fair is the first of the light.”

"One of the chief charms I find in a garden, is to say to myself: 'I am shut up, I and my imagination, my body and spirit in a place filled with flowers, that is to say, with rich colours, dulcet perfumes, and songs of birds . . . where no one will come except a friend.'"

—ALPHONSE KARR.

AUGUST

AFTER a spell of glorious weather, the sky, grey and overcast, has opened its flood-gates, letting fall upon the parched garden a welcome rain, and the rich smell which arises from fallen leaves, gives us a foretaste of Autumn. How the pictures of Summer flit before us when the first grey day appears after a long reign of bright sunshine and blue skies. But we may still keep Summer with us for a few weeks yet, although we cannot help noticing the almost roseless gardens, the dimmed brightness of the green trees, and the twilight hour falling earlier upon the world.

August suggests the sea, blue waves and golden sands; idle days and sweet wanderings high above the weed-strewn shore, with the sea-perfumed breeze blowing around us, where Nature seems to be but

"An empty sky, a world of heather,"

where

"Crowds of bees are giddy with clover,
Crowds of grasshoppers skip at our feet,
Crowds of larks at their matins hang over."

Many a beautiful picture the sea's border has to give. Perhaps one of the fairest scenes is the sweet sea-valley, lying between the downs, cool with the fresh breeze blowing in from the sea through the gaps at the end of the vale where

the waves and sunshine are at play, and the graceful cliffs, towering high, are gleaming like silver in the bright light, and from whose every crevice and cranny peep the golden blossoms of the horned-poppy, viper's-bugloss, thrift, samphire, and eryngo. Many blossoms still enliven the grass on the crest of the cliffs; vervain with its pale flowerets; agrimony with its long stalk of tiny blooms like threaded stars of gold; the glittering eyes of the pimpernel wide open to the sun; harebells, clustering together, make patches of blue like "little bits of fallen sky"; here may be found other bell-blossoms, for the downs are a favourite spot for several of the *Campanulacæ*. Sweet are the visions of vale and height, their beauties changing hour by hour from earliest dawn, when the pearly mists hang over the sea like a veil which is drawn aside by hands invisible as soon as the first ray of the rising sun gilds the ocean, pictures of Summer ever changing until the end of light when the red orb in the west slips beneath the sea, blotting out the scenes around as we wander homewards by pastures and sea gardens,

"Thro' buried paths where sleepy twilight dreams
The sunlight away."

.

Even into the very heart of the city kind Nature sends her pictures of Summer, from the happy world breathing peace to the toiler who has not the means nor time to wander afar. As I sit in the very heart of the great metropolis this August day, I count half-a-dozen silver globes of thistle-down floating in the air above the crowd, and one of them flying in at the window frolics about the room. I wonder how many miles the wind has borne this thistle-down along, and to how many over whose heads it floats it has brought to mind some

spot by the sea, some nook in the country, where happy days were spent, when care sat upon the heart as lightly as thistle-down? To some, no doubt, it brought back to memory many golden days. Ah, the seasons are the milestones of life; they are books of remembrance between whose pages are laid the flowers of happiness, the petals of the rose of love. For is not life made up of sweet remembrances? The griefs we can count, but its joys are innumerable!

But Summer is passing away as silently and as gently as it came, just as calmly as it bestowed its beauties so it withdraws them, and with the last day of August "good-bye" must be said to Summer.

“ Fear keeps the garden better than the gardener.”

—GEORGE HERBERT.

"I am quite of opinion that a garden should look as though it belonged to the house, and the house as though it were conscious of and approved of the garden."

—ALFRED AUSTIN.

SEPTEMBER

"Come, autumn, season mellow,
With golden leaves a-fall ;
Painting each blossom yellow,—
A glamour over all.
A world of radiance living,
Of silent loveliness ;
A benediction giving,
Summer to bless.

There's golden harvest for the upland's crest ;
A golden realm each vale with mists unfurled.
A golden path in every mead of rest ;
Making the whole wide land a golden world.

Stay, autumn, winter's bringing
The sullen clouds and rain ;—
When no blithe bird is singing ;
No blossom on the plain.
But birds are silent never,
The roses live above
The snow for those who ever
The garden love.

There's golden harvest for the upland's crest ;
A golden realm each vale with mists unfurled.
A golden path in every mead of rest ;
Making the whole wide land a golden world."

**"A Garden!—The word is in itself a picture . . . a fairy
ground of sweet enchantment."
—"E. V. B."**

"If your garden be large enough you can let Nature have her own way in certain parts of it."

—GEORGE MILNER.

SEPTEMBER

Roses in the garden
Blossomed yesterday,
But their leaves are fallen,
Withered on the spray.

Green leaves on the branches
Now with dew are grey ;
Gold leaves fill the meadows,—
Summer's passed away.

Roseless is the garden,
Green leaves turned to gold,
Thus is Summer ended,
So the story's told.

"A RAIN and ruin of roses," and thus the Summer ends.
Suddenly it comes one day—

"The change in the grey garden closes
To the last stray grass of the strand,
A rain and ruin of roses
Over the red-rose land."

As we look back, what has been our fairest garden memory? It is, perhaps, the tender harmony of flowers and birds, light and soft winds, flower perfume and fragrant rains. Even the tiniest demesne to some is

"A miniature of loveliness, all grace
Summed up and closed in little."

If we are lovers of reading, often in a garden will echoes be heard, as it were, from pages that have delighted us that need

not be re-read, for the flowers breathe the words: an echo from Milton comes—

“Where choice
Leads thee, or where most needs, whether to wind
The woodbine round this arbour, or direct
The clasping ivy where to climb; while I,
In yonder Spring of roses intermixed
With myrtle . . .”

Or does Dante whisper—

“Vola con gli occhi per questo giardino,
Che veder lui t' accendera lo sguardo
Piu a moutar per lo raggio divino.”

Of all the favourites of the garden's occupants, perhaps roses have held us most in enthralment during the summer. Sir Edwin Arnold says of this flower of flowers in his “Seaside Garden” :—

“Wild roses! That leads us back to yonder splendid and sumptuous white Devon Queens of the Garden, hanging their scented heads in garlands of beauty round these windows. If we could only do as much by education for the races of man as the gardeners since Adam have done with the common dog rose, what would not be the progress of humanity by now? . . . The finest rose-bush in its origin has really been a mere road-side briar, from which the botanist slices away its exuberant shoots and crowns, leaving a bare stock, with a stout twig or two, whereon he makes incision, to graft therein a tiny bit of the bark and buds of some high-class full-developed glory of the parterre, to the nourishment of which the rugged, primitive forces of the lowly briar are thenceforth loyally and lavishly given. Once and again the peasant mother throws forth a sturdy shoot or

two of her own simple hedgerow blood ; but these foster-brothers and foster-sisters have to be quickly sacrificed in order that the alien but high-born graft may live and thrive, taking to itself all the rich vitality of the rude and vulgar stock."

"All things look strange in the pure golden æther ;
We walk through the gardens . . .
And as loud as birds sing the bloom-loving bees."

—MRS. BROWNING.

SEPTEMBER

"Those bloom-burdened days!"—How sweet it is
To walk the garden's Summer-remembered ways,
Leaf-golden now, where wind breathes in its kiss :
"Those blossom-burdened days!"

A mirage fair arises through the haze,—
Lost flower-faces, that in Summer's bliss
From bower and bed seemed in mine eyes to gaze.

Queen roses red and white, how much I miss
Your loveliness ; speaks Autumn sad wind-lays,
And taunts my mirage, mocks my grief with this :
"Those blossom-burdened days!"

(GARDEN MIRAGE.)

"SPEECH is silvern, but silence is golden!" This old saying is equally applicable to the two very pleasant seasons of the year—Spring and Autumn. First comes Spring, that opens with the new light and the silver melodies of the birds when first their songs rise so liquid clear, so joyfully sweet, awaking to blossom every bare branch on which they sing ; the opening eyes of silver-fringed daisies, where white lambs frolic ; the stream and river taking the reflections of over-hanging bud-tipped branches of sentinel trees, and clouds, silver-dressed, all the world bright with Spring's silver. And then, after beauteous Summer, comes the golden silence of hushed Autumn, when the world's melody has ceased—save for a few faithful birds ;—and in keeping with the golden silence, are the golden leaves and marvellous sunsets, and the golden moon of harvest.

To-day the September garden is still a spot of exquisite blending of colours, standing out in many places as a beautiful picture graced in a golden frame. The garden's contents are as yet a mixture of Summer and Autumn flowers, which no longer partake of the delicacy of Spring flowers nor retain Summer's primal beauties, but are all of sturdier growth. Surrounding the great seed-filled discs of the sunflowers a charming study of bird life we may behold in the blue-tits. Watch their many antics as they cling to the drooping heads of the giant sunflowers, perching in the quaintest of attitudes whilst wrenching a seed, then darting to a near fence to enjoy the spoil. These birds are easily detected by their little not unmelodious snatches of song. The robin's song grows sweeter and its breast brighter, although its beauty of hue is somewhat lost amid the wealth of bright-tinted flowers and changing foliage; we shall admire it when all the colour from the garden has departed, singing to us in the wintry days to come, perched upon some frost-glittering fence, there gleaming like a rose left ungathered by Summer in her flight, or hopping upon the snow-white garden-bed like a blossom blown from a sunny Summer-land.

To-day I gather perfect roses from the garden, together with lovely sprays of blue plumbago; these and African marigolds, orange and lemon-tinted dahlias, single and double—the latter the very life of the garden at this season—make a gay posy.

Climbers and creepers are never more pleasing than now: the Virginia creeper, without the loss of its green freshness, takes on its leaves the Autumn glow. Honeysuckle and bryony, where they mingle together about some arbour, are now a joy to behold. Near them, in the herbaceous border,

the snap-dragon keeps unstained the velvet lips of its blossoms ;
also undimmed are the starry blooms of the tobacco-plant,
whose perfume, with that of mignonette,

" Feeds
With Summer spice the humming air."

And in the midst of Autumn's wealth the true gardener's mind is busy with next Springtime's—and even next Summer's—garden, planning what he will do in his pleasure, the new beds he will form and fill with certain flowers which to him will be most effective ; and he lives, so to speak, one or two seasons ahead, seeing in his mind all his plans brought to perfection. And this pleasure of anticipation, this dream-life of a garden, is, perhaps, one of the greatest ; for in it are no failures, no disappointments that so often crown unstinted care and the untiring labour and thought expended upon a garden. So let us enjoy the September garden while lingering roses sweeten the air, and joyful birds are happy in the sunlight, heedless of the flight of time, all confident in the goodness of Nature !

"England!—the very name has power to conjure up a garden."

—CONSTANCE MEREDITH.

SEPTEMBER

THIS year we have had an ideal dawn of Autumn—the crown of the year—and yet sweet Summer lingers. Over garden the butterflies hover amid the many gay-coloured flowers, greeting each other as they meet in the golden sunlight, as if wondering why and yet glad that Summer stays. Yet when we turn our eyes away from sunny garden ways, we see upon the face of those fields where lately waved the corn, the long furrows showing strangely even through the stubble. A striking contrast to these sun-loving things which belong to the heyday of Summer, is the appearance of our Winter friend, the robin. How plaintively come its first notes, which are all of dead leaves and bare trees, frost-bound river and desolate gardens not far distant. A few days since the Autumnal gossamers were first noticeable. Very quaint are some of the many superstitions connected with the gossamer. In German folk-lore it is believed to be the threads of the garments of the Virgin in which she was buried, and which fell from her at her ascension; they are also termed *Sommer-Fadden*, from the idea that Summer flies away with them.

Although that slow change—the greatest charm of Autumn—is seen stealing over hedge and tree and many a shrub, certain paths still show all the loveliness of Summer-time. Beautiful violas make thick borders of colour of violet and yellow, and begonias keep undimmed the soft tint of blossom

and leaf, and even the ferns retain their refreshing green appearance.

I love the Autumn garden in the sharp, bright morning, when sunlit lawns, still dewy, lie patched with grey and silver. In the border, by the pathside, full-blossomed stocks, lilac and puce-coloured, stand sturdily above the mould. At breast height, over its mass of rich, green leafage, the dahlia shows a crimson face to the sun, and in the brilliant air, uncertain, intermittently flutter the wings of the last butterfly. How beautifully painted are the following lines from William Morris's "Earthly Paradise"—

"It was Autumn, when the sun
Brightened the parting year so nearly done,
With rays as hot as any June might shed
Dawn past an hour, upon the tulip-bed,
In the great pleasance, 'neath a wall of yew.

.
A thin-leaved apple tree, where, red as blood,
Yellow as gold, a little fruit hung yet,
The last rays of the fainting sun to get ;
And a tall clump of Autumn flowers cold-grey
Beneath it, mocked the promise of the day,
And to them claspt, a hapless bee or twain ;
A butterfly spread languid wings in vain
Unto the sun that scarce could warm her now."

"At times when tired out by life's petty worries, surely the calm of the garden can never fail to soothe and refresh."

—HELEN MILMAN (*In the Garden of Peace*).

SEPTEMBER

"**H**ERALDED by rain" the Autumn was ushered into our presence. It is upon one of these Autumn dawns, buoyant and fresh, that one not only sees but feels, the Summer has departed, when walking in the open soon after the grey dawn-hours have grown golden with the sun that rises majestically and is hovering above the eastern horizon. The mists from the fields are fast departing, their departure only leaving larger jewels upon every leaflet. Hung from stem to stem are the spiders' dew-threaded gossamers, through which the sun is glinting, making the edges sparkle with brilliancy. The morn is perfectly calm, not a breath of wind is stealing over the empty fields that were until quite lately waving golden with the unreaped corn. Upon the pathway a few dead beetles are lying, dew-drenched, gleaming with a purple iridescence. From the gardens passed in this September dawn a brilliant posy could indeed be gathered, comprising the helianthus, asters, gladiolus, coreopsis, phlox, and the still lingering, graceful Shirley poppies. In the corner of many a cottage garden the purple umbels of the elderberries are fast arriving at that stage to be of service to the careful housewife. The nasturtiums and dahlias are among the gayest blossoms of the garden, but, alas! when the first frost comes their foliage will be the first to wither. The blossoms of *Anemone japonica*, the palest of Autumn flowers, stand out well among so many bright flowers and golden leaves, resembling the white rose

of our hedges (*Rosa arvensis*) in the colour and form of their white petals and yellow centre, although the foliage and structure of the plant differ entirely. *Oenotheras* are still beautiful, they do not now fade so quickly as they did in the height of Summer when the hot sun of early morn bade them fade, and banished the beauty of their star-time nativity ere we had time to discover it; they keep their beauty till noon is past, as though thoughtful, staying to garnish the fast-fading garden.

.

As I pass along in the early dawn I stop to gaze upon one garden that is bright with many a golden sunflower, and the heart of him who is busy within it, I know, is full of dreams, for the little lass who ran about its paths a year ago—the sunflower of his life as he used to call her—who runs no more there, her merry laughter as she played among the golden leaves breaks not the morning stillness; golden leaves are falling where she sleeps, and golden flowers wave above her folded hands. These are most likely his thoughts—this idyl of the sunflower—and as he toils in silence I think that our thoughts are oftentimes better than the best books, for where, on any page, could be found words expressing his memory?

"The garden is always beautiful, and I am nearly always
in the mood to enjoy it."

—THE SOLITARY SUMMER.

SEPTEMBER

NOW

"The robin sings amid the fading leaves,
Brief notes that sum its fitful Autumn lay,
Full sad and sweet it comes at close of day ;
The heart for ended Summer sighs and grieves.
For, ever in its brief September lays,
We catch a prelude to the wintry days."

The swallows are darting low over the stubbly fields and close shorn meadows in the last golden rays of the fast-setting sun, where, as soon as the light has quite departed, will be born the Autumn evening mists. The perfume of the lingering mignonette, together with that of the tuberose—

"The sweetest flower for scent that grows"—

steals upon the calm air ; the boom of beetle and hum of gnat are the only sounds that break the stillness of the dying day. Past is the sunlight ; in the west is but a faint light to show where it sank, and the air, grown cooler, speaks too of its flight. The mists, which were the first signs of Autumn's coming, gather pearly over the garden, wrapping the velvet-lipped snap-dragon, and other blossoms of which the garden still boasts, in their white folds, rising around the escallonia, whose fiery blossoms are still unextinguished, and that mingle with the creamy flowers of the *Magnolia grandiflora* against the wall. But the mists only rise a few feet above the earth, for on high is a clear starry sky, from out which the mellow moon begins to shine with a singular radiance, gazing down

upon meadow and field, where from out the short grass, while night wraps all, the mushrooms will be peeping to fleck the dew-strewn meadows with their snowy whiteness in the morning sunlight. In the woodlands the feathery mass of the seeds of the wild clematis, or travellers' joy as it is mostly called, already whitens upon the hedges, growing more silvery day by day.

From the trunks of the plane trees the bark is peeling, as one may notice by their mottled appearance; they have already shed many of their glossy leaves. The chestnuts will soon be dropping their bunches of green-spiked fruit, encasing the richly coloured and exquisitely polished nut, to the great delight of the children. Their fruit, split into three quarters, will be lying thick upon the roads, and when fallen we see in one or two quarters of the shell the nut snugly lying in its white case like a red sard in a cushion of satin.

"An old-fashioned garden . . . where Nature had her way
and gracious thoughts could visit one without any
jarring note."

—IAN MACLAREN.

SEPTEMBER

Forget not that the year grows old,
Now that the trees are touched with gold ;
The mists are out upon the plain,
Seed of the wild and wintry rain,
And out of which in barren hours
Shall bloom the magic of frost-flowers.

.
And while we turn to autumn skies,
Fair harvest visions fill the eyes,
The poppy blossom's faded red,
The golden grain now harvested.

.
But dream not that the year grows sad,
When lie before us seasons glad ;
The golden sheaves, the stored grain,
To April-green shall turn again.
What visions golden autumn weaves !
What thoughts attend the fall of leaves !

(AUTUMN VISIONS.)

"**S**EPTEMBER, all glorious with gold !" But not yet is it
the time for trees and hedges to be dressed in the pure
gold of Autumn-tide, for the leaves must first pass through,
not a fiery ordeal, but one of cold winds and a few frosts
which so often attend the first days of October, and which
purify, as it were, the world of its dross, showing us the beauty
of the pure gold of leaf. If from busy street we turn lane-
wards, we now behold the thinning of the branches in many
places, emptying their leaves upon the parched bank below ;
and in the hedges we may espy at times a desolate nest on
empty branches that in the Spring was a happy household and

the birthplace of woodland minstrelsy. But now no sound of bird-song greets our ears, for all the land seems voiceless, one harmonious silence, characteristic of the youth of Autumn.

The cricket's chirp grows less in its favourite haunt, the wayside's brown patches, burnt with the sun, where the lofty stems of the yellow-blossomed mealy mullein are now up-reared.

All things in Nature are touched with a weariness; even the swallow, but late passing us on fleetest pinion, tarries on tired wing.

True to time, the Michaelmas daisies bring to the garden its doom, the message of death, of which asters are the emblem. But of all the many varieties of these Autumn daisies, none are more worthy of thought than *Aster Bessarabicus*. It is of dwarf habit, and to behold it with the sunlight upon its large yellow-centred stars, massed together and of a vivid violet hue, is a picture that will live in the memory until flowers come again. But the hand of the year grows more feeble, week by week, to keep the flowers it would; and stretched across the garden pathway are the long Summer-grown branches from the rose-bushes, often tipped at the very end with a cluster of pink-hearted roses, as if compelling one to admire them.

Very delightful are these present evenings, when in the sunset breeze slender poplars and graceful elms shake from their branches a shower of leaflets; when in the beryl-tinted light of after-sunset a crowd of swallows whirl against the western sky dotted with purple clouds, the colour of the birds; when the rising moon burns behind the misty twilight trees; and in the sky the ever-falling stars, on earth the falling leaves!

"All rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime."
—SHELLEY.

SEPTEMBER

POMONA is reigning. In England the fruits, the outcome of the pink and white blossoms of orchard boughs, have grown ruddy and golden by drinking in the sunlight, mellow and juicy with many a gentle shower, and are quite ready for gathering. Many an acre of orchard-land is now resounding with the voices of busy pickers. But from the world's many sunny shores there has been rolling into England, month by month, a huge wave of delightful fruits, for England boasts not of her own rearing the ruby-seeded pomegranate, nor the luscious banana, whose fruit lies together like clusters of golden crescent moons. Although England boasts not these, besides countless other fruits, she holds one her own, that surpasses, perhaps, those of any other country, a fruit that is monarch of all—the grape, with purple clusters hanging like rubies with a mist upon them, and white like strings of chrysoprases of the coolest and most translucent green!

Christina Rossetti in her "Goblin Market" arranged Pomona's gifts in charming order—

"Come, buy our orchard fruits, come buy :
Apples and quinces, lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries, melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-checked peaches, swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries, crab apples, dewberries,
Apricots, strawberries ;—All ripe together.

Sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages, damsons and bilberries,
Currants and gooseberries, bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth."

September days in London are always fitful. Often a day falls that is one borrowed from Summer, torn, as it were, from her as she hurries hence; days there often are of sparkling brilliancy, with moments, now and again, but at rare intervals, of dimness, when wandering platinum-coloured clouds pass over the face of the sun's golden orb that swims through a blue sky. Such a day of clear light shows up the grime and dust on the walls of our national buildings, where the only touch of youth and cleanliness is given by the blue pigeons that flutter around the weather-beaten, fog-blackened figures!

September days in the garden! Who can describe them? Oh! to walk by hedgerow and woodside, where Pomona's poorer subjects gather to greet her, where the purple fruit of clustering blackberries hang beside the dull-red sloe. Many places are quite vermilion with the "coral jewellery of the hedge,"—the fruits of the wild rose, bitter-sweet, bryony, and hawthorn. So bright, so keen is the air, still scented with the hay, blowing over fields dotted with newly-built stacks! Here the sunlight is at home; the cloud-shadows chase each other over sheep-strewn fields, where the timid animals, looking white and soft after their Summer shearing, stray at will along the verdant leas.

"The music of Nature . . . like many . . . of our little songs . . . requires a poet to feel and understand it. Sing them in the valley and woodland shadows, and under the leafy roofs of garden walks. . . . Sing them not in the loud world!"

—LONGFELLOW.

SEPTEMBER

AUTUMN-TIDE is here truly. One has only to look across the land at misty morn to discover the fact. The sultry days of late Summer at last relinquished, these present morns open with all the beautiful characteristics which belong to Autumn, found principally in the mists and falling leaves, which fall faster from the trees,

"First one and then another, till the branch
Unto the earth surrenders all its spoils."

Day by day at sunrise the hedges are festooned more thickly with the fairy gossamers, woven into the most fantastic patterns; each long line of silk is strung with dew-jewels, and so exquisitely delicate are the gems of Autumn morn that even the lightest touch from human hand spoils their beauty and dims their lustre. While the morning mists lie over all on lowly earth, the blue sky is seen above; sun-flowers gleam boldly through the motionless vapour from their lofty stems, shedding a light that mocks the sky's golden orb.

Breaking the dawn-silence at last, the birds begin their notes, sounding sweetly on the fresh air, birds unseen until the hour of the clearing of the mist has come, when the sun, gathering strength, draws up into its rays from the earth its harvest of dew sown by the hand of night. And then, when the light has fully come, insect life begins to

stir: behold the hover-flies poised fantastically above the great discs of the sunflowers, or alighting gracefully on the glittering coreopsis that trembles on its thread-like stem; behold the golden-banded bees flying with all speed from flower to flower, paying, as it were, their farewell visits. The meadow trees are just touched with Autumn's first change, and which will anon be resplendent with many glowing colours; those also of the orchard are fast relinquishing their emerald brightness, and in the breeze are displaying their hidden store of fruit. Throughout the day a thousand messengers are abroad upon the air which Summer sends out to tell of her departure—grey silk-like globes of thistle-down, birds on hastening wing, falling leaf, droning insect, and racing clouds, and the like, heard and seen from misty morn till dewy dusk. Here and there from a wayside garden the smoke from burning weeds and withered stems ascends, and nothing speaks to us more plainly of Autumn than the beard of flame arising from the centre of a heap of ruined Summer flowers. Swallows no longer are flying singly, but gather in companies and whirl above the trees till far into the dusk, when all the world is lost to sight, hidden in the grey folds of Autumn mist until the birth of brightening morn.

"A garden stored with Poesy,
Where flowers and herbs unite."
—WORDSWORTH.

SEPTEMBER

HOW still the year has grown we all have noticed, and the one faithful forerunner of Autumn—the robin—sings tenderly Summer's requiem. Yet there is glad gold of flowers in the garden, and "yellow-legged bees hum a dreamy lyric, and the light on the brown wall is a great work of art; and the glitter through the leaves makes the pulses beat," as Olive Schreiner somewhere observes.

Many of my garden friends—the birds—have left me, and the rest will hasten their departure with the first cold winds; but while Summer stays they will still be companions, at least, so it seems. An observer of bird life says of this migratory instinct in birds: "Some idea of the great power underlying the impulse to migrate may be gained when it is mentioned that swallows have been known to perish rather than forsake their young in a fire, yet they will leave their second callow brood in obedience to this mysterious instinct. The force that is stronger than the devotion of motherhood must indeed be great! There is no evidence to prove that any of our Summer visitors breed in their winter quarters with the exception of the sand martin, so that doubtless the mere desire to perpetuate the species governs the flight north. This theory is based upon the fact that whilst the flight south is led by young birds of the year, the journey north in the Spring is led by old ones that have already known the joys and cares of parenthood."

As we turn to empty fields and emptying hedges, a thought comes back, even among the Autumn glory—of what has the beauty of the fields chiefly consisted in? And in our retrospect let us turn to some lines of Ruskin's: "The fields! . . . Consider what we owe to the meadow-grass, to the covering of the dark ground by that glorious enamel, by the companies of those soft, countless, and peaceful spears. The fields! Follow but forth for a little time the thought of all that we ought to recognise in those words. All Spring and Summer is in them—the walks by silent scented paths, the rests in noonday heat, the joy of herds and flocks, the power of all shepherd life and meditation, the life of sunlight upon the world, falling in emerald streaks, and soft blue shadows, where else it would have struck on the dark mould or scorching dust, pastures beside the pacing brooks, soft banks and knolls of lowly hills, thymy slopes of down overlooked by the blue line of lifted sea, crisp lawns all dim with early dew, or smooth in evening warmth of barred sunshine, dinted by happy feet, and softening in their fall the sound of loving voices."

"Oh, let me plead with thee to have a nook,
A garden nook."

—ERIC MACRAY.

SEPTEMBER

NOTHING is lovelier in Autumn than to behold the
uplands golden with the fern.

"Gloriously decked with colours royal,
Bright purple heather and golden fern,
Are moorland and down and slope and headland,
Desolate height and thick haunt of hern.
One golden bright in its fading beauty—
One glowing rich in its birth deferred,
And long delayed till is almost over
Sunshine and blossom-time, and is heard
Wail of wind scattering leaves and flowers,
Forerunner of the cold, white hours."

No doubt it was on such a day, when walking among
heather and fern and ripening berries, Wordsworth, our
Nature poet, penned the following—

"How sweet upon this Autumn day
The wild-wood fruit to gather,
And on my true-love's forehead plant
A crest of blooming heather."

Autumn is the time of the changing of the green fan-shaped leaves of the Virginia creeper—a plant that of late years has done much to redeem many a corner from its look of sterility to a picturesqueness only attainable by this cascade of greenery. And how often has it been remarked that it wants but blossoms, of which it is quite bereft, and to be ever-green to be an ideal climber. This beautiful creeper, like many another plant, is more noticeable in the days of its decline

than throughout the months of its vigour ; and this is but one instance of how much in keeping are the laws of our being and those which govern the plant world.

Bees amid the purple heather
Sing a praise to autumn weather ;
Butterflies all bright-winged cling
To the fading spires of ling.
Stubble-land where late was corn—
So Autumn's born !

Seed of thistle ever flying ;
Golden deaths the leaves are dying ;
All bright things for rest now yearn,
In the time of golden fern.
Mistier night and dewier dawn—
So Autumn's born !

"Here (in England) something almost human looks out at you from the landscape . . . I had been told I should see a garden, but I did not know before to what extent the earth could become a living repository of the virtues of so many generations of gardeners."

—JOHN BURROUGHS (*Mellow England*).

SEPTEMBER

WHAT are the memories of each of us when

"In looking on the happy Autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more" ?

Sweet to the senses were the days of gentle rain that came in earliest Spring, awakening the world once more to life from the long sleep of Winter. Welcome, too, were the first soft winds that came and kissed each brown twig into laughing leafiness, bringing back bird and blossom, bidding hedge and tree put on its bright robe of the new green of unfolding leaf, and the stream to put away its misty look for a breast of shining silver! And then how doubly sweet when, later still, green garden and field were embroidered with flowers, swallows returned, and joy by joy crowded upon us till June came with its flower of flowers—the rose. It is while "looking on the happy Autumn fields," where are seen the bands of reapers, that one is taken back to the days but lately past and "that are no more." Summer-time has reached its evening hours, and in its twilight temple the one flower of early Autumn, the *Lilium auratum*, swings like a silver-jewelled censer sending forth a most fragrant incense. In garden the golden rod now dons its feathery blossoms, and bees lazily crawl over the honey-filled scabious; gay gladioli send upward their flowering spikes, like cloven tongues of

fire, amid the clumps of Michaelmas daisies crowned with gold and pale purple stars.

In the early dawn, when grey clouds hang motionless over golden fields, rise flocks of awakened birds, looking olive-brown with the morning tint, dark against the horizon, and the only sound that breaks the stillness is the pleasant whirr of their wings.

"In my Autumn garden I was fain
To mourn among my scattered roses."

—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

SEPTEMBER

Between the dahlias, towering tall,
I walk by garden paths, where fall
The lofty elm trees' golden leaves ;
From bush to bush the spider weaves
A web of silk, dew-diamond strung.
The fallen golden leaves among
A withered rose at rest for aye—
"That Summer should have passed away !"

I hear the call of Spring-born thrush,
Deep in the woodland's solaced hush.
For him the berries ripen red,
His food to be when Autumn's fled.
Untasted Winter ! unseen snow !
Wise bird, yet you each secret know.
These are the words of his sad lay—
"That Summer should have passed away !"

The rose-hips redden on the hedge,
Like golden tapers grows the sedge ;
The berries of the bramble shine
As jewels, where the branches twine
Like old-age-beards, the traveller's joy,
To seed-time grown from flower-time boy.
The sun breaks thro' the mists of grey—
"That Summer should have passed away !"

"**T**HAT Summer should have passed away" seems sad indeed—Summer so long looked for, so swift to pass away ! Our holidays are over, and most of us are back once again in the busy world.

The sky to-day is overcast ; the first Autumnal rain is falling upon my garden, and a sense of sadness fills

the still warm air, as the odour of the newly-fallen leaves is blown in at the window. To-morrow, maybe, the sun will be shining in its old warm brilliancy from a bright blue sky, unstained by cloud, and the harvesters will be busy gathering in the golden grain, and the orchards be resounding with merry voices as they gather the luscious fruit; but to-day both occupations have to be deferred. The granary at the old farm is emptied of its last year's harvest store, and within it the children are playing at hide-and-seek, their merry laughter and shout waking the old owl from its slumber amid the rafters. The farmhouse garden at this season is still beautiful with the last flowers of the year; a clump or so of Japanese anemones lend it quite a summer appearance, and here the dahlias, single and double, are very fine both in colour and size; the beautiful *D. Mercki*, *D. Coccinea*, and the dear old-world *D. Variabilis* numbering among them. High above all the flowers of this September garden tower the "broad sunflowers." The commonest of the sunflowers is, of course, *Helianthus annuus*, and it is interesting to note that this species was first introduced into this country from the Western United States in 1596. The other varieties of sunflower common to our gardens are *H. d. multiflorus* and *H. rigidus*. Now blooms to perfection the Michaelmas daisy. Zinnias and petunias enliven the beds, and even roses, in no haste to sever their acquaintance from us, are still in bloom, shedding a lustre around, their lingering beauty reflecting the summer-time.

At the end of September the air begins to blow keenly across the golden woodlands. What a lovely stretch of colour lies before us. The green ivy shows a bright contrast, where it sends up its cable-like stem to the very

THE HARVEST WAIN.

top of the old elm, whose giant arms are now clothed in golden leaflets. The ivy, as it winds itself around the aged tree trunk, seems to me—'tis but a fancy—to be sending up a message to the tree top from earth that is all about the flowers, and ferns, and grasses, the beauty of the undergrowth at the tree's root; the tree top in return sends back its message of the great world it views from aloft, of the joy of the blue sky, the glory of the sunset, the beauty of the moon and the stars in their courses, that gleam above it season after season when the world is wrapped in its cloak of snow, or clad in its full garniture of leafiness.

Here, with the sky for dome, Nature keeps her harvest festival in the temple of the world. The villagers are busy preparing for their harvest thanksgiving in the ivy-mantled church, whose aisles will shortly be sweet with the odour of fruit and flowers, sent from many a cottage garden—sincere offerings from servant to Master. This service at the church is joined in most heartily, from the youngest child of the village to the old grey-haired gardener, with bent form, who calls to mind many a harvest verdict, who numbers Spring-time sowings and harvest ingatherings by the score; and soon for him, with his years completed, his life blessed and crowned with honest labour, must come

“The final harvest hour,”

with its sweet reward of rest.

"There is an individual character to every plot of land as to every human face in a crowd, and that man is not wise who, to suit preferences for any given style of garden, or with a view of copying a design from another place, will ignore the characteristics of the site at his disposal."

—J. D. SEDDING.

SEPTEMBER

The corn is gathered, harvest-tide is done ;
No more thro' leaf-enshadowed lane,
From field goes by the ambling wain,
With golden store
From dawn till past the light of sun.
No more !—

Summer-time ended, harvest all but past,
Flow'r-time to seed-time perfected at last.

The winter's near, the days of wind-blown cloud,
October first with leaf-strewn ways,
And then the sad November days
Appear,

Merging to briefest day that mists enshroud.

Next year,—
Be patient yet ! new flower and leaf and light,
Shall wake when ended is the old year's night.

SWALLOWS clearing the air in restless and impatient mood suggest a preparation for their Autumn voyage, and yet this sequence of glorious days bids them delay any visible vigorous arrangements for departure. Days such as these—so swift to change—often follow harvest. Few scenes are more beautiful than our sun-flooded stubble-fields, that were late waving with the golden grain and poppy-jewelled, then sheaf-studded, but now emptied of all but the sunlight and cloud shadows.

At this period, too, with thistle-down flying on the wind,

one's attention might with profit and pleasure be directed towards the marvel of seed distribution. Some seeds are carried by animals, the plant itself growing in the place frequented by a certain species most suited to its requirements, and involuntarily in this instance, the seeds having hooked hairs or processes, such as burrs and cleavers. Some seeds are scattered by the plants themselves, as for instance, our little herb Robert, which throws its seeds some twenty-five feet. We all know well in what manner the dandelion can plant its seed miles away from the parent root; we have all of us listened in the hot Summer noon to the bursting of the gorse pods, sowing its seeds. So we see each wayside "weed" has a marvellous life-history. Ruskin writes in defence of these so-called "weeds"—

"What right have you, O passer by the way, to call any flower a weed? Do you know its merits? its virtues? its healing qualities? Because a thing is common, shall you despise it? If so, you might despise the sunshine for the same reason."

"Oh! a lifetime were not enough for all I should or could do
in a garden."

—MAUD MARYON (*How the Garden Grew*).

" A garden is man's report of earth at her best."

—J. D. SEDDING.

OCTOBER

Leaves are falling, clouds are flying
Fast across the dreary sky ;
Birds are homing, flowers fast dying,
Sighs the north wind drearily.
Soon on empty boughs that shiver,
Thick will lie the hoar-frost white,
Where but late green leaves did quiver,
Joyous in the sunshine bright !

Autumntide is here again,
Fading leaf and falling rain,
Cloud-strewn sky and sodden plain ;
Flying wind moans far and wide :
" Autumntide, sad autumntide ! "

Gone the sweetness of the roses,
Kissed by sunlight, wooed by wind ;
Grey mist lifeless stem encloses,
Glad-world ways with grief seem blind.
But beneath the earth are sleeping,
Flowers to waken when the sun
Bids them no more dreams be keeping,
Called to life by Spring begun !

Autumntide is here again,
Fading leaf and falling rain,
Cloud-strewn sky and sodden plain ;
Flying wind moans far and wide :
" Autumntide, sad autumntide ! "

"Nature furnishes us with a true basis, and leads us to the margin of her charms, and gives us whispers of her harmonies in the budding coppice, carpeted with the blue hyacinth . . . given as advocating the importation or scrupulous reproduction of unfettered nature in the garden."

**—THOMAS H. MAWSON
(*Art and Craft of Garden Making*).**

"A garden that one makes oneself becomes associated with one's personal history and that of one's friends, interwoven with one's tastes, preferences, and character, and constitutes a sort of unwritten, but withal manifest, autobiography."

—ALFRED AUSTIN.

OCTOBER

THE swallows are gone and Summer is over!

Let us go out into the Autumn world. How keen is the morning air as we walk in Nature's studio, for she is, as it were, sitting at her easel. How glorious are the trees in the fitful sunlight of October, as it comes and goes, bathing the world now in fiery gold, now in sombre shadows! In the woodlands the winged seeds of the maple are falling down among the leaf showers, whirling as they fall earthward in their own peculiar manner.

The sheaves are gathered in, the fields are bare, and a look of increasing desolation is noticed day by day.

Now that the fiery finger of Autumn is touching the leaves on tree and hedge, the world seems to stand out in greater glory, far surpassing the radiancy of Summer, when gardens were filled to overflowing with numberless floral gems, and the leaves were green, sparkling brightly in the sunlight. We rejoiced to sit under branches of the trees, out of the sun's rays, bathed in the cool, green-tinted shadows of the twinkling leaves, of which they are fast being stripped. Soon the trees will be wholly dismantled, to stand out bare and brown against the grey sky of Winter, and ghostly their form will be discerned through the thick mists, while the north wind is sighing mournfully through their nakedness.

Yet how beautiful were the trees a short time since, when clothed in their emerald garb (for the glorious tints with which they are now adorned is very brief), not beautiful only with their different foliage, but in their motion. A Nature lover observes there are those which derive some part of their beauty from their power of motion. Of some kinds this is true. There is real beauty and solace in the quiver of the aspen, and in the waft of the tresses of the weeping willow. Their movement is in keeping with their place by running streams.

"Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs for ever,
By the island and the river."

How graceful, too, is the gentle sway of the cloud-kissed poplar, and the rhythmic swing of the Lombardy poplar, the leaves of which are for ever rustling and glowing in the gentlest breeze and in the faintest ray of sunshine. The air is aromatic with decaying leaves and lingering flowers.

In the orchard apple-tide and pear-tide is over; the luscious fruit, like the corn, is stowed away. In the garden the sunflower still stays, although its eye grows dimmer day by day.

"I, too, must wander lonely round,
And mourn through all the garden ground,
My early withered flower."

—WHYTE-MELVILLE.

OCTOBER

Golden bracken in the hollow,
Golden leaves upon the wind,
Tells of Winter soon to follow,—
Summer, Autumn, left behind.
Ah, for all sweet seasons over,
No leaf left the land to cover.

All the world is very weary,
Sad the hours of flowers bereft;
All the days are very dreary
When the trees are leafless left.
Wait in patience till the flower
Comes back with Spring's magic power.

THE season of gardens is over and Autumn is keeping her sunlit festivals. Day after day she revels in golden glory, and one has time at this season to behold the beauty of leaf-formation, so diverse in pattern. Look under the hedge, where, half buried in heaped-up golden hawthorn-leaves, a spike of the cuckoo-pint or wake-robin berries strike a note of rich vermilion in the chord of surrounding harmony. Note also the string of heart-shaped leaves of the briony thrown in lovely carelessness over the hedge, and the tiny fire-red leaves of the cranesbill close pressed among the moss, and then try whether you can catalogue or name the varied tints! And as to the leaf, which is the plant's chief gladness, it was pointed out nearly a hundred years since by Goethe in his "Metamorphoses of Plants," that all parts of a flower are simply modifications of the ordinary green leaves, they being altered in size, form, colour, texture,

and function so as to promote the perpetuation of species by seed ; and all the observations of the past century have gone to confirm this view.

In the Autumn wind one almost hears the finale to the harvest anthem of joy, begun in the time so beautifully expressed in words by Mrs. Oliphant : " Harvest ! Cornfields are bending their golden load under the reaper's busy hand. Pleasant sounds are in the air—harvest voices, harvest mirth ! . . . Here hath our bountiful mother been rendering riches out of her full breast once more ; here, under those two broad, bright, smiling heavens, the rain and the sun, which God sends upon the just and the unjust, have day by day cherished the seed and brought it forth in blade and ear ; and now there is a thanksgiving in all the air, and quickened steps and cheerful labouring proclaim the unconscious sentiment which animates the whole. Bright, prosperous, wealthy Autumn days, wherein the reaper has no less share than his master, and the whole world is enriched with the universal gain."

"I do sincerely trust that the benediction that is always awaiting me in my garden may by degrees be more deserved, and that I may grow in grace, and patience, and cheerfulness, just like the happy flowers I so much love."

—ELIZABETH AND HER GERMAN GARDEN.

OCTOBER

Golden leaves upon the wind,
Lowly whirl and high are flying ;
In the garden frost unkind
Bids the lingering flowers be dying.
Scudding clouds across the sky
Seem to whisper, swiftly hieing,
"Good-bye !"

Last birds, late on lingering wing,
Steer from dark to landscapes clearer ;
Wearier leaves to branches cling,
And the Winter draweth nearer.
Hark ! comes sad the vesper bell,
Whisp'ring to the twilight hearer,
"Farewell !"

THE Autumn tints are falling like a glorious mantle upon hedge and tree, and over many a hedge there lies a beautiful blush caused by the ripening berries, which Nature, in her kindness, is preparing in an attractive form to be the food for our bird-friends when the frost hardens and the snow obscures the ground. The October sun still gives out a genial warmth, and to those busy in the garden it is most acceptable, for there is much to be done at this season in preparing the soil for the Spring bulbs, and for any new arrangement in the matter of roses. And next in favour to the "queen of flowers," requiring much thought and care, is the chrysanthemum, which, like the rose, is endless in variety. The rich tint of leaves and last flowers that brighten our

gardens suggest to us many happy thoughts ; and, indeed, we are throughout each season of the year, as Lowell says :

“Compelled, as it were, to notice
All the beautiful changes and chances,
Thoughts which the landscape puts and glances ;
And to see how the face of common day
Is written all over with tender histories ;”

— the tender and wonderful histories of unfolding leaf, bursting bud and falling seed, with their accompanying insect and bird life.

Phil Robinson, in one of the most entertaining of his Nature-books, “In my Indian Garden,” says: “A garden everywhere is to the natural world beyond its walls very much what a good review number is to the rest of literature. Shrubs and flowers, indigenous or of distant derivation, attract an equally miscellaneous congregation of birds and insects by their fresher leaves, brighter blossoms, or juicier fruit, and detain for a time the capricious and fastidious visitors.” One could quote many passages about gardens and what they seem to teach: their invitations and their friendships, for unlike other friends, these never grow old or desert us, but return each year with their sweet faces unaltered.

"Change in the grey garden-closes . . .
A rain and ruin of roses."

—SWINBURNE.

OCTOBER

WHEN the spent "night aches into day," in all the peace of an October day, I walk out where Autumn is shedding her leafy tears. How quiet is all around; it seems as though most of the world's inhabitants are still safe in the lap of dreams, far away in the haven of restful hours. A blurred landscape of blended opal and rose, above which is a faint suggestion of sapphire, the prelude to, and promise of, a delightful day. Gay with Autumn leafage the hedges wind till lost in the fast-vanishing mist, like long strips of gaudy ribbon, or, as they cross and recross empty wastes of square fields, these hedge-limits appear as the gilt edges of great books! Oh, to lift the covers of these seeming mighty tomes; to know but a little of the many mysteries of flower and insect; the working of rain and mist; dead leaf and new leaf! Under the acacia boughs a litter of olive-coloured leaflets; under the variegated maple a ruin of fallen foliage, white and green. Here and there in gardens the laurustinus is showing its corymbs of crimson-tipped blossom-buds, to open anon a wonder of white starlets with a breath as sweet as hawthorn; side by side to them the yews stand freckled with their red berries. Upon walls hang, lingeringly, yellow roses, showing their red hearts, strangely bright, peeping down upon their garden friends, tall, straggling nasturtiums, and seedy marigolds dank with heavy dew. The rose-robed sun at last shines through the mists, and the enambered hedges, fringed with dew-threaded gossamers, glitter and glint in the birth-light of the sun!

At noon the elms stand out golden-green against a sky of blue ; the red sloe-foliage against either side of the farm-field gates splashes, as with blood, the lintels—for Autumn's pass-over angel. Flecked is the grass with multi-coloured leaves, warm and dull reds, fiery and subdued browns, clear and mottled yellows—many-coloured and beautiful beyond the possibility of description or enumeration. Crisp leaves of beech crackle beneath one's feet ; more crisp the bracken rustles in the undergrowth, while embroidering the hedges at the feet of tangled grasses and withered stems the herb Robert spreads its cardinal leaves of elegant design. Above, a lark, wooed back to song by the seeming return of Summer, floods the empty fields with its music.

October nights make the world one dull sheet of sombre, pitiless colour, wrapping everything with a cold, clammy mist. Upon all an overbearing silence steals ; everything seems to be given up to sleep and to the utter abandonment of decay ; by the hopelessness of its appearance, each tree is putting off the beauty of its early change as the rain falls faster and faster. Comes the sound of bells chiming the hour, telling of but two left to sum up the day. The ceaseless boom of fog-signals break upon the air, hinting of discomfort and danger. Under foot the soft oozy fragrant leaves ; a long road of flickering lamps, lighting but faintly the wet roads, where the rain swirls and eddies in the roadside channels ; a ceaseless drip of gathered raindrops falling with the falling leaves in musical splashes. The rain blows into our eyes, lending a halo to the faint lights. No star is visible on high, no break is seen in the great stretch of bare, black heaven. Better to be out of sight of all such dismalness, to

sit in the warm room, listening to the creations of some master of melody—some song of Mendelssohn's, an aria of Beethoven's, a melody of Mozart's, whose wonderful phrasing, heart-glad or soul-sad, have power to conjure up in our fancies scenes of joy or sorrow.

"The garden . . . It should by no means imitate the wilfulness or the wildness of Nature, but should look like a thing never seen except near the house."

—WILLIAM MORRIS.

OCTOBER

O month of changeful moods, and mingled days ;
Springtime and Summer seem to haunt the woods,
Where balmiest breeze a dulcet tune still plays.
O month of changeful moods !

The leaves wax bright as Summer flowers, while broods
O'er them the doom of change, though fair as May's,
A sunlight clear the land of silence floods.

The morn is hung with Springtime's silver haze ;
Clear Summer sunlight steeps the golden roods
Of leaf-strewn land at noon-tide as we gaze.
O month of changeful moods !

TO-DAY the floor of the woods seems literally strewn with gold: large leaves and small, perfectly shaped, unblighted, lie in abundance everywhere. Never were the trees more golden with the many rich hues that are wonderfully harmonious. To walk in the peace-filled woods to-day was to walk as in some fairyland; filtering through golden boughs fell shafts of sunlight upon the leaves beneath our feet. The exquisite scene conjured up many fancies. It seemed as though weary Nature, sitting at her loom, was tired of weaving with emerald thread, and, keeping her glowing colours until the last, was now weaving them as a lovely border for her finished leafy tapestry.

Yet with one's eyes closed it might be Summer still, where the lanes are sweet with sun-warmed fragrances. The sun gleams in July majesty from a sky of clearest blue; the

south wind blows deliciously, and a lark sings unseen high above; day by day it has sung for some time past, often when lost to sight, soaring through the low-hanging clouds of grey, its song falling earthward, powerless to rise through the mist and seek for the blue that lies beyond.

“I know not which is sweeter, no, not I,”

the lark's song in the Spring or Summer or at Autumntide. To hear its silvery notes in Spring above a world of waking leaves, is to listen to a tune ethereal, that rises and rises, borne upward with the clear ascending air; to listen to its song on some June day above a garden of roses or the rustling green wheat lit with the poppies' flames, is to have the whole meaning of Summer interpreted to us. But to hear it in Autumn, as it mounts through the mist on wet wing, is to hear a mournful, yet mellow song, not buoyantly rising as in Spring, not light and fanciful as in Summer, but falling, falling, mingling with the mist, filling the land with a homeless melody.

"Outside the garden the wet skies harden; the gates are
barred on
The summer side."

—SWINBURNE.

OCTOBER

Fast change the days to grey from gold;
More close the year's fair pages fold
Leaf on leaf together.
Tree after tree the world grows bare,
A calm more deep reigns everywhere,—
So fades Autumn weather.

THE Autumn interlude, played ere the hues of the sunset
of nature be wholly faded, is sweet, its suave melody
is restfulness to the heart, if sometimes a sad refrain to the
ear. It shows that we are, as Swinburne says—

"On winter's traces—
The mother of months in meadow and plain;
Fills the shadows and windy places
The lisp of leaves and the ripple of rain."

Were the leaves to fail in their mission, that by falling
tell the time of year so faithfully, there would still be left
to us a host of other heralds that speak with a wonderful
certainty of the advancing season. And perhaps two of the
most prominent Winter heralds are the mosses and the birds.
Allied to the mosses and fungi are those lovely encrusta-
tions, the lichens, which everywhere are now visible. Surely
they tell of coming Winter. George Meredith sings of this
season in his "Dirge in Woods"—

"A wind sways the pines,
And below
Not a breath of wild air;
Still as the mosses that glow
On the flooring and over the lines
Of the roots here and there,
The pine-tree drops its dead."

This is, too, the season of mosses. How tenderly Ruskin speaks of them: "Meek creatures! The first mercy of the earth, veiling with hushed softness its dintless rocks; creatures full of pity, covering with strange and tender honour the scarred disgrace of ruin, laying quiet finger on the trembling stones to teach them rest. . . . They will not be gathered, like the flowers, for chaplet or love-token; but of these the wild bird will make its nest, and the wearied child its pillow. And as the earth's first mercy, so they are its last gift to us: when all other service is vain, from plant and tree, the soft mosses and grey lichen take up their watch by the headstone. The woods, the blossoms, the gift-bearing grasses, have done their parts for a time; but these do service for ever. Trees for the builder's yard, flowers for the bride's chamber, corn for the granary, moss for the grave."

"Broad-faced asters by my garden walk."

—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

OCTOBER

THERE are, perhaps, no prettier pictures than some of the old cottages around here whose walls are clad with vine-leaves turning golden, while from out the wind-stirred foliage bunches of grapes white and purple are peeping. In these gardens the "moss'd trees are bent with apples," sunned to rosiness, and as red as the healthy flush on the cheeks of the happy cottage children. On everything has fallen that solemn peace that only early Autumn knows. No bird is heard save the voice of the robin singing a requiem over the grave of the dead lilies, for hushed was the bird-music when the sultry days of Summer commenced. The pleasant murmur of insects, too, is stilled, that made sweet music by hedgerow and fieldside—chiefly the busy bees skimming the breast of a million waving flowers and quivering grasses. Thus it seems that amid the Autumn peace, with the year's greatest work done, Nature is contemplating her great plans for the coming Winter. Golden paths are lit with the last floral fires in the glow of the purple phloxes and lingering asters which are fast giving place to the true flower of Autumn—the chrysanthemum. Dim grows the eye of the garden's most majestic flower—

"Sunflowers looking up to the sun,
A flower sun, it grows, I ween,
A hundred blossoms and yet one."

While the genial days are yet ours, the frail petunias will still keep friends with us; nor is any Autumn garden complete

without its clusters of the flowers of the day, the violet-rayed Michaelmas daisy.

Do not many of us wish for the Summer days of golden gladness that now are over, as we look upon the fallen petals of the last perfect rose? Do we not sigh for the pleasure that the hours of work in the garden gave us, because soon we must say farewell to our favourites as they fall into their Winter sleep, longing for the time when they shall awaken and their bright faces smile again into our own? We live in an age when the quiet peace that a garden affords us can be enjoyed to the utmost, for, from out of the whirl of this century of hurry and excitement, where could sweeter peace be found? Not solely on this account is the pleasure of a garden greater, but because to-day the art of gardening has arrived at perfection, and new and beautiful plants are added to its lists day by day and are within the reach of all. The Hon. Miss Alicia Amherst says in her beautiful book, "The History of Gardening in England": "Little could be thought of the quiet pleasure of a garden while William I. and his sons ruled the conquered English with a rod of iron . . . while men's minds were occupied with the Crusaders." But as these things ran their course, gardens were thought of, and loved more and more. How delightful it is to-day to come across an old garden, to wander beneath its "pleached alleys" or bypaths of clipped yews, where still may be traced the quaint fancies of our forefathers, in clipping yews to represent a peacock and various birds, and other devices dear to the heart of the arborator; to stand by a ruined fountain or the moss-grown sundial, to trace thereon some such mottoes as "Time, the devourer of all things," "Sunlight is recorded by shadow, shadow by sunlight."

"My Garden sweet, enclosed with walles strong,
Embanked with benches to sytt and take my rest,
The knots so enknotted, it cannot be exprest,
With arbors and alyes so pleasant and so dulce."

—CAVENDISH.

OCTOBER

IT was a handful of dead leaves which I gathered along a favourite walk in the mellow charm of October's morn, bright with the light that is shed in the year's golden-leaf days, that turned my thoughts upon the mystery of colour; for everywhere around me the trees, half hidden in the silver mists, rose as mountains of gold, and every hedge appeared as a veritable Joseph's coat. To tell of Autumn's leaf-beauty has been for countless able pens. But *my* handful of leaves were, perhaps, worth considering. The leaves of the lime, like golden hearts, I gathered first, because they were the first to give the signal of Autumn's approach. It seems but yesterday that their honey-coloured blossoms overburdened the air with perfume and we were able to walk ankle-deep in buttercup-stars, listening to the piping of birds in the cool whisper of the chestnut trees, their branches weighed down with white spikes of blossoms. As with golden coin the ground beneath the elm trees is sprinkled, token of the last days in this leaf's beautiful, brief life. For in every tree there are three stages of coloration: the emerald green of Spring, the dark green of Summer, the tints of Autumn, which are endless in variety; beautiful, too, is the gradation from Spring's primal green to Autumn's final hue. The first of the ash leaves fell at the first touch of frost some weeks since, and those I gathered to-day were of a dark and muddy tint, for it is very casually that the leaves of this tree cling to the branches

until yellowed. How crisp my sprig of beech, shining with its natural lustre like beaten copper ; and of a like tint, only of a richer hue and more fiery, the leaves of the plane !

As I stooped to gather the rich leaves of the oak, comes back an eve of Summer, when, under the same trees, I watched among the branches a beautiful monstrous stag beetle, humming furiously. How I longed to possess it ; and yet I had no wish to catch it, for to gaze upon it for five minutes, happy in its brief existence, to listen to it droning in the twilight, was worth far more than years of possession of its lifeless body.

What is this cause of the trees' one consent in changing from "the green leaf to the sere" ? Probably it is because the energies of the trees have become weakened, unable to supply their great families with nourishment necessary in preserving the emerald tint. The earth calls each fluttering leaf-banneret, for she has need of them, and they must fain obey and flutter down upon her breast.

Colour, with me you will agree, is a mystery—the colour of the day sky ; the soft violet, velvet, star-sprinkled canopy of night ; the greys of dawn ; the flush of sunset, with its soft tints the colour of doves' breasts, down to the fierce blood-red and leaden hues. Immense mystery ! The deep pure colour of a crimson rose, whose beauty is heightened when glows a dew-jewel upon its petal ; the burning gold of the daffodil and sunflower ; the pale yellow light of the primrose ; the violets in their home of moss ; the poppies' fiery flame among the emerald wheat ; the pearly irradiancy of the April anemone. Why and whence these fiery hues

and tender shades? Your botanist and your chemist will tell you that the green colouring matter in plants is nothing else but the visible appearance of chlorophyll, the red silk-like petal but denotes the presence of erythrophyll, the hue on the wallflower's blossoms but pharophyll. Colour,

"What is it? A learned man
 Could give it a clumsy name,
 Let him name it who can,
 The beauty would be the same."

First and foremost in the world the prevailing colour is blue, the colour of the great sky, the colour of many flowers, the colour of one of the loveliest of jewels, the colour with which we associate the eyes of little children—

"Eyes the bluer for all those hidden hours
 That pleasure fills with tears,"

as Swinburne sings. At the mention of this colour, in thought we fly to old scenes where with happy hands we gathered blue violets under blue skies, or peeped with our inquiring eyes into some hedgerow home to count the blue eggs; or we sorrow at our inability to gather the frail blossoms of

"The little speedwell's darling blue."

The mystery of it all, so beautifully expressed—

"Flower,
 . . . I pluck you . . .
 Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
 Little flower—but if I could understand
 What you are, root and all, and all in all,
 I should know what God and man is."

"There is a large crop of moral reflections in my garden,
which anybody is at liberty to gather who passes
this way."

—CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

OCTOBER

ALTHOUGH many of these present October days are sunless, there lies on the floor of the woods a golden sunlight made by the bright fronds of the graceful bracken fern. Besides the harvest of the fruit and several grains, there is this harvest of the bracken, which is of Nature's own gathering, reaped with hands invisible: not with scythe or sickle is the reaping accomplished, but with gentle rains and sparkling frosts, laid low in this manner and garnered into earth's bosom. Very poetic and tenderly suggestive is the harvest of the ruddy bracken. It was indeed a beautiful sight to behold our Springtime woods, when the long stalks of the bracken uprose amid the dead leaves like bishops' crosiers, and when the fronds were fully expanded and woods were like a sea of emerald waves. Tennyson, noticing its height, said even

"The broad oak of Sumner Chase"

was

"Hidden to the knees in fern."

Some of the many superstitions relating to the bracken are curious. In many of our northern counties an opinion was largely entertained that the burning of the fern brought down rain; and we read of an English monarch who, having an occasion to pass through Scotland with some chosen friends, sent beforehand strict injunctions that no fern was to be burnt. Even to-day, in the highlands and lowlands of Scot-

land, where the fern and heather is burnt at the close of Autumn, this same belief is general among many. To-day, in countries abroad, where ferns grow in luxuriant loveliness, they are looked upon by the natives with a very superstitious feeling, thinking it an omen of ill-luck to gather them for fuel or even to touch them. Faith in the magical properties of fern-seed was once prevalent in England. It was believed to have the power to make one invisible at will. It was said that the seed of the fern became visible only on the Eve of St. John, and that it was under the peculiar protection of fairies. Upon this night most tremendous conflicts took place between them for its possession; those, therefore, who were addicted to the art of magic, and possessed sufficient enterprise, were said to watch in solitude during the hours of St. John's Eve in order that they might secure the seed at the instant of its appearance. Shakespeare was, no doubt, thinking of this myth when he wrote in *1 Henry IV.*, ii. 1 :—

GADSHILL : . . . We have the receipt for fern-seed,—we walk invisible.

CHAMBERLAIN : Nay, by my faith; I think you are more beholden to the night, than to fern-seed, for your walking invisible.

"The gardener should follow the true artist, however modestly, in his love for things as they are, in delight in natural form and beauty of flower and tree, if we are to be free from barren geometry, and if our gardens are ever to be pictures."

—WILLIAM ROBINSON.

OCTOBER

HERE and there beside the gossamer-festooned hedges accentuating the trees' squandered gold, one chances upon a golden dandelion disc, glowing with all its cheerful brightness. This flower is one of the loveliest among the *Compositæ*, with flowers of golden hue; it far surpasses the goat's-beard, which shows such a beautiful globe of feathery down, that must this Summer have been admired by many. Richard Jefferies' note on the dandelion always comes to me when I see these bright blossoms. "What is the colour of the dandelion?" he asks. "It is not yellow, nor orange, nor gold; put a sovereign on it and see the difference. They say the gipsies call it the Queen's great hairy dog-flower—a number of words to one stalk; and so, to get a colour to it, you may call it the yellow-gold-orange plant. In the winter, on the black mud under a dark, dripping tree, I found a piece of orange peel, lately dropped—a bright red orange speck in the middle of the blackness. It looked very beautiful, and instantly recalled to my mind the great dandelion discs in the sunshine of Summer. Yet certainly they are not red-orange. Perhaps if ten people answered this question they would each give different answers. Again, a bright day or a cloudy, the presence of a slight haze, or the juxtaposition of other colours alters it very much; for the dandelion is not a glazed colour, like the buttercup, but sensitive. It is like a sponge, and adds to its own hue

that which is passing, sucking it up." Perhaps it looks more brilliant now through having drunk of the lustre around it, of the mighty trees' fallen foliage, which makes Autumntide so lovely in the woods, under whose rich carpet Nature sinks to sleep, to the *berceuse* of the wind :

Cradled beneath us, blossoms sleep ;
Dreams of the Springtime now be yours,
That soon will wander to our shores,
The woodland festival to keep.

Now vanished from the sight of man,
Flown far away on wings unseen,
To fairyland that once has been
The golden time, the age of Pan.

**"A garden is the jewel-casket of Nature, wherein she stores
her fairest gems, living and fragrant."**

—E. CASTLEMERE.

NOVEMBER

When come November days with all their sadness,
Dead leaves, and mist, the ever-falling rain ;
No rose in any garden speaks of gladness,
No bird in any woodland sings its strain.
Sad as good-night across the darkness spoken,
When fall apart the hands to meet no more ;
When with a grief the heart is well-nigh broken,
To think that sight of face and hope is o'er.
November days ! November days !

November days, dear hearts, will clear and pass ;
Spring blossoms wait beneath the withered grass ;
Trust on ! hope on ! tho' mist the world may fill,
The golden sun tho' hid is shining still !

In life's November list we for hush'd voices ;
Across the mist eyes ever watch and wait
For one loved coming, and the heart rejoices,
With Springtime's promise, tho' the year be late.
Then glad as voices thro' the sunlight calling
When friends return and hands are laid in ours,
Comes Heav'n's blest voice upon the darkness falling,
That tells the brightness of Eternal hours.
Eternal Spring ! Eternal Spring !

Ah, life's November mist will pass away,
In brightness dawn the changeless Springtime day ;
Hope on ! trust on ! God's promise shall not fail—
Eternal Spring—beyond the Veil, beyond the Veil !

"These Gardens of Poetry! and through the midst of them flows the broad stream of Memory, isled with fair liliated lawns, fringed with willowy forests and whispering reeds. And not less beautiful than these ideal shades are the gardens which live unchanged and unchanging in many a painted picture within the heart."

—"E. V. B."

"Those peerless flowers which in the rudest wind
Never grow sere,
When rooted in the garden of the mind."
—TENNYSON.

NOVEMBER

THE days when the green leaves whispered on waving boughs are over, and the golden and crimson glory of their fading beauty is past now that November, month of bare boughs and empty fields, is with us. With gardens sheltered, and as yet unvisited by any severe frosts, chrysanthemums still claim a friendship, and the arbutus, or strawberry tree, is in perfection, bright and contented-looking, standing friendless in the mist, decked with its fruit and blossom.

To eyes observant of Nature's movements November is a month of great interest; the opal pastels of the misty landscapes, the vignettes of stream and river flowing in silence, are well worth studying. By the stream, no longer the joyous world of birds, insects, and flowers, stand the tall skeletons of thistle and teasel, their foliage so green and glowing in the quivering tangle of the grasses but a short while since. Dead and beyond recognition wave the withered stems of the willow-herb, that were crowned with a mass of rose-red blossoms that, fading, expanded in due course its seed vessels filled with silver down, a striking contrast to the green cascade of the willow trees, whose leaves fell around it like thin strips of yellow satin. But now, along the stream's edge the grey-stemmed trees sigh and shiver in the upward curling mists, standing out silhouetted against the grey sky. But a bright morn in November paints for us quite a different

picture, when the hoar-frost lies thick upon the empty boughs, and the crisp leaves that hang on the hedge, and upon those swept by the wind ; to see them sparkle in the light of the rising sun, as it creeps up from its bed of mist, smiling through the opal curtains, gives promise of a genial day. The tinkle of cattle-bells ringing through the fast-vanishing mists rising from the meadows breaks the stillness ; and then the warm sun, having conquered the vapours, calls forth the belated insects from their hiding-places, and renewing their Summer energy, are soon upon the wing. Watch them in the sunlight as they collect around the ivy flowers, one of the latest of late blossoms.

But for another pastoral—a day of twilight and rain, a veritable November day. Hour after hour of rain beating down from a leaden sky on to the few remaining leaves, and battering down those already fallen deeper into the earth in Nature's own ever-wonderful way, to be food in their decay for the sleeping flowers. Among the stubble of the fields, the stones, washed clean with the rain, stand out, reflecting the sky's grey light. November rain, how depressing it is, how wearisome the dark and murky day, suggesting gloomy thoughts, whispering of death and decay, yet bidding us hope through all ! So different is the cold rain in comparison with the sweet rain of April, that, falling upon the awakened earth and unfolding leaves, tells us of life new born. Sad days are these which give no shelter to the birds among the leafless branches ; horses and other cattle in the pastures look pitiable in the beating downpour, as they stand huddled together in the shelter of the hedge, gazing upon us with their large, patient eyes, if perchance we pass. A sad pastoral, but not without interest.

The first fall of snow came to-day with its silent message, so beneficial to the garden, covering with its pure pall the unsightly limp and blackened leaves of the dahlias and nasturtiums. The snow is the manna of the plants and bulbs now hiding beneath the ground, to glorify the garden at Springtime.

In the warmth and glow of my room I sit, the firelight mirroring itself upon the old-world furniture. A fragrance as of spice and cedar is around me. Ah, I remember; a little while ago I lifted the lid of a jar of pot-pourri.

“ An old blue jar beneath the old bureau,
Traced with a dragon, quaint in its design,
Wreathed willow leaves and needles of the pine,
Owned once by one in Cathay, long ago.
Whence came the perfume, ling’ring in the room,
Of roses, lavender? The spicy breath
From lifted lid tells of a faith in death,
Love’s constancy fills all the twilight gloom!
Sweet old pot-pourri, tales of days gone by—
New tales in old, crisp leaves; though roses die
By thousands, though a hundred summers pass,
Though sands run whole shores through Time’s measuring glass,
There will not be a tale so sweet, so pure,
As this jar’s fragrant spiced leaves immune!”

And as I sit in the rose-leaf fragrance there come to me pictures of gardens where maybe some of the leaves were gathered. Sweet dream-gardens! One of which I dream is a garden of the long ago, whose date I know not, but it is very, very old; the sunlight and shadows are playing among the clipt yews, the wind sings softly among its alleys, heavily laden with the scent of lilies and lavender. Walking along its paths, I see a maiden in the golden sunlight of life’s

morning. The dew is still upon the flowers, and she is standing beside the sundial, plucking blooms from its rose-wreathed pedestal, above which is the quaint motto, "*Quid celerius umbra?*" (What is swifter than a shadow?)

The sun is gone, forsaking the shadows that fall deeper around the clipt yews, and once again the maiden is there, and one is beside her, walking together by gay parterre, or standing beneath the stars upon the rose-twined terrace, whispering love's old golden vow: "Till the roses cease to blossom, till the stars forget to burn on Heaven's floor, I will love you!"

But of another Garden yet—a Garden bright with living, pulsing light, with never a shadow at play. There grow fairest roses, and lilies pure as newly-fallen snow. We have all dreamt of this Garden. When some lovely child-lily folded up its petals in the bitter light of earth's garden, we dreamt of it; when some maiden, fair as an opening rose, faded away, we dreamt of it. And in our grief did we not pray that our feet might be found worthy to enter into that Garden, and behold our lost blossoms, for ever fadeless, in the light of Eternity?

"Design and form is the very soul of a dressed garden."

—SIR GARDNER WILKINSON.

NOVEMBER

Red fruit upon the wall, grown over-ripe with sun.

Brown leaf in golden setting of leaf-fall

Begems the ground, tired with its mission well-nigh done—

Red fruit upon the wall.

Grey rain on river and the grey mists' pall.

On high a lifeless sky strewn with clouds dark and dim,

Sad woods wherein no wild-bird voices call.

Old year, the last length of thy race is all but run ;

Last flowers hang drooping, but the last of all

To stay, some overlooked and over-ripe with sun

Red fruit upon the wall.

THE leaves are falling in greater profusion, but the fall has reached its climax, for the cold wind and mist and rain has whispered to them of Winter. Every lane that we found so cool in Summer with the overshadowing foliage when the Summer land was filled with shimmering haze, has changed its many mingled perfumes that came from the hedgerow blossoms and bank-set herb, for that of decaying leaves. No more are our favourite ways lit with the clear leaf-light, but are filled with the smoke from woodland fires. It is interesting to watch the fall of the leaves as they drop from the different trees, each in their own peculiar way, each dyed in their individual colour. The leaf of the ash falls down heavily, almost unchanged in hue ; yet how quickly to turn black when fallen. The birch, elm, and beech, and almost all the other trees, give back to Nature their leaves in vivid tints, flying in the air, wafted far in their fall.

Of the changed foliage there is none more beautiful than the tapering leaves of the chestnut (*Castanea Vesca*), and which linger on the trees till late, still perfectly formed, and of bright gold. Here and there along the hedges we espy, a long way ahead, little flames of red, which are seen to be the changed foliage of the blackberry, and one almost fancies them to be lights that burn for the burial of the woodland year. Beneath the hedge among the moss, grown very green, the blood-red leaves of the herb robert lie close pressed; under the green furze-bushes St. John's wort turns as bright a yellow as that which painted its Summer blossoms. On the top of the trim-cut privet hedge surrounding the garden a golden litter of leaves are laid, contrasting very beautifully with the changeless green, and another thing of note in the garden is the fire-thorn's clustered berries. And as we walk among the last of Autumn leaves, countless little circumstances—the woodlander gathering the falling fagots, the birds flying in flocks or feeding together in the meadows—tell us of

“Stern Winter that needs preparing for.”

"To be successful, a garden must respond to and satisfy
man's longings for the beautiful."

—THOMAS H. MAWSON.

NOVEMBER

The garden speaks while pass the long sweet years
Season by season through the land, and seeks
Our human friendships ; by her smiles and tears
The garden speaks.

When time foots carelessly Spring's new fair weeks
The garden tells of youth ; and all the joy it wears
In Summer sings of love's flow'r-time, where beaks

Blithe bird its song. And then when Autumn bears
Its promised gold, telling of life past prime and fears
For Winter, then it is of quiet rest that nears
The garden speaks.

(GARDEN VOICES.)

IT seems but yesterday the garden spoke of life and happiness, so clear was the sunlight, so unfaded the trees, for Summer had stayed so long. The garden sinks to its silent sleep, its beauty is in a grave covered beneath golden leaves. Yet there are some blossoms that are bravely holding on to life : the vine of the passion-flower is in many places a tangle of Summer green, contrasting beautifully with the creeper by its side all scarlet flushed. The warm red flowers of the geranium, and roses with their June charm are with us ; also I notice spikes of larkspur as blue and as clear as April's sky ;—it even seems as though representatives of each of the vanished months had come to take a last farewell. Another garden is without a flower ; the only token of its beauty is in the tall dead feathers of the golden-rod now turned to silver with

the mist gathered thick upon its brown dead blooms. In other gardens there seems to remain a sense of consolation and happy rest in the newly-dug borders and beds, as though here visible Nature was glad to be at peace after months of colour and busy blossoming of flowers, gay butterflies and glittering insects.

There is tender beauty and pictures of loveliness for us to admire in the Autumn light: the sun seems of a distinct hue, seen at no other time as in

“Golden-girt November,”

when

“The lustrous foliage, waning
As wanes the morning moon,
Here falling, there refraining,
Outbraves the pride of June
With statelier semblance, feigning
No fear lest death be soon,”

as Swinburne sings. The sunlight, as it shines through the branches of the trees when the mist is banished by the sun's power, makes the leaves transparent with dew, and appear to one's eyes as a fanciful resemblance of golden hands full of silver veins. And how many of us, as we watch the falling of the leaves in the Autumn sunlight, think of Nature as taking her rest, forgetting the work that is in progress—underground in root, overhead in branch, beside us in trunk of tree. For an illustration of this, take the witch-hazel, that has just shed its Summer raiment. No sooner have its dead leaves fallen, no sooner has it parted with its old life, than it directly begins its new by forming its leaf-buds. This

function is prettily expressed by an American author : "She decks herself out in yellow gimps and fringes, seeming to say through the ominous rustle of falling leaves, 'Neighbours, you are all mistaken in giving up and going to sleep. See how thrifty and courageous I am !' "

"A garden should hold nothing but pure and tender thoughts; the flowers seem to whisper: 'This is a world of peace, a place of calm retirement, a haven of restful dreams.'"

—CONSTANCE MEREDITH.

NOVEMBER

EVERYWHERE it is gossamer-time.

Tennyson sings—

"Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on the dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold."

Even Autumn will soon be over, and the "calm and deep peace" that is characteristic of this season will be changed for the bitter, boisterous winds, ringing through the leafless woods, telling "O' coming winter's biting, frosty breath."

"Nae mair the flow'r in field or meadow springs,
Nae mair the grove with airy concert rings,
Except, perhaps, the robin's whistling glee,
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree:
The hoary morns precede the sunny days,
Mild, calm, serene, wide spreads the noontide blaze,
While thick the gossamer waves wanton in the rays."

In the foregoing lines faithfully has Burns described these, the latter days of Autumn. One of the prettiest of natural objects in Autumn is this fairy-like hazy filament of the gossamer, mentioned by both the poets quoted above; and indeed by almost every one of our sweet singers. Did not Michael Drayton tell us of Queen Mab's chariot with the nimble gnats' "harness of gossamere"? From branch to branch, along the hedges, from pale to pale, it may now be

seen festooned in fantastic forms, so delicate that too close a breath will spoil it, even the lightest touch will mar its beauty; it seems a fabric woven upon some elfin loom. On a morning (the last but two of October) these mist-strung gossamers were the loveliest to be seen this year: the morn was misty and raw, every leafless twig was tipped as with a diamond, with its large drop of gathered moisture. Throughout October these gossamers were floating in the dry, clear air, almost invisible, flashing like a thread of light in the sunshine. But the time to see them is in the early misty morns of these present days, when they lie scattered everywhere, powerless to rise in the air, being fettered, for the dew has sought them out and threaded them thickly with its silvery beads. The weft of these Autumn flosses is, as most of us know, the work of an unconsidered spider, an insect of passage. This is certain, although incomplete information prevents the exact knowledge of the doings of this gossamer-spider, who weaves this silken cordage to navigate it in its aërial flights. How wonderful is this instinct, planted by Nature even in this atom of life!

One web of gossamer stretched in a leafy corner of the garden was, a day or two since, a marvel of loveliness; it was but the work of the common garden spider (*Eperîra diadema*). Who has not often watched it at work in the Summer garden, weaving its new home or mending the riven meshes? In no spot is the contrast more striking than where the gossamers are flung amid the blush of the osiers, or veiling the golden leafage of the hedgerow, or silhouetted against the tarred fences.

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To-day there is not a gossamer to be seen on either branch or paling! I could not help thinking how fickle Nature is in some of her ways, for, to all appearances, to-day was a perfect replica of yesterday, when the white gossamers were everywhere: the same misty morn of grey light, the ceaseless drip from the trees, whose leaves are covered with the white of the frost's frondescence. Up from the river over the banks the mists come tumbling through the long, dreary day, prefixing Winter. The roads are sticky, the paths clammy, and the soil, moistened by the heavy mists, clings to one's boots; the fragrance of decaying leaves, to-day so very much like April hyacinths, pervades the air. These are the days that gossamer-time brings, telling of many more waiting ahead ere the blue skies of Spring shall dawn!

"O! nothing earthy save the ray
(Thrown back from flowers) of Beauty's eye,
As in those gardens where the day
Springs from the gems of Circassy."
—EDGAR ALLAN POE.

NOVEMBER

AFTER a night of high winds and drenching rain, the Autumn morn breaks fair indeed, setting before us the dazzling brightness of its rain-washed golden glories. The trees' frail foliage is seen in the morning light to have fallen very profusely and close pressed to the sodden earth, making path and roadway a mosaic pavement of many tints of gold. And this beautiful change is presented to us year by year, long centuries before, long after, Dante wrote—

"Come d'autunno si levan le foglie,
L'una appresso dell' altra, infin che 'l rame
Rende alla terra tutte le sue spoglie."

The green tint of Summer, with its many varying shades, never palls upon us, neither do the glowing tints of this season, touching, if one may so express it, the whole gamut of red, gold, and brown. In sooth, these morns are fair, awaking with all the seeming brightness of Summer, although it is the late Autumn which we behold. To-day, above us spreads a sky of dazzling blue, clear and shimmering as a lustrous sapphire, albeit a sky emptied of the skimming swallows. Yet to take the place of our Summer birds appear other birds of passage, heralding Winter, bringing frost upon their wings; redwings and fieldfares we now

may notice fly in flocks across Autumn acres, stretches of land that are wonderfully harmonious in colour; fields of brown furrows, and yellow stubble, partitioned off with hedges of livelier hue, yet all blending together, making one golden chord, striking to its fulness the note of Autumn.

"England . . . is studded and gemmed, as it were, with castles and palaces, and embroidered with parks and gardens."

—WASHINGTON IRVING.

NOVEMBER

FROM Phantasy to Pathos! So the change in the garden from the fair days of Spring to these dismal November hours might be so named. In the first days of Spring, all of a sudden, the white briony flings here and there over the hedges its thin veil of tenderest green; in many places, too, the bitter-sweet entwines its verdant vine among the lower branches of the unfolding hawthorns. All of a sudden, when the frost is quite gone, the primrose stars light the thicket, and sweet indeed is the magic of the Spring! In the new-born light the chestnuts are the first to unfold their baby leaves; the sticky knobs tipping every twig let fall their scales in the warm sunshine, freeing the green bloom-spike which is set in the midst of downy leaves, and which spike is to be fashioned anon into a pyramid of creamy flowers, and the heart of each separate blossom to be splashed with pink and gold. But Spring, with all its many fancies, has long fled, and Summer also, whose ways were tricked out in the gaudiest of colours with its bright flowers, the lovers and friends of bees and butterflies. This great desire and vain-glory of the flowers for bright colours plays a wonderful part in their brief lives, for, if you notice, only insect-fertilised flowers are gay-coloured; wind-fertilised flowers are generally insignificant, hence the blossoms of the clustering grasses swaying in the meadows, the reeds and rushes and sedges along the river banks, the catkins of many trees—the powdery pollen of all these is scattered by the wind. The pollen within the deep lily-cup and within the shallow chalice

of the rose is left for the bee and butterfly and moth to distribute.

Ecstatically sweet as the early Spring was with its many fancies that came with the unfolding leaves, so immitigably sad is the time of their fall. We most of us have grown so accustomed to the falling of the leaves that we do not count it a curious phenomenon; we have also grown so familiar with the growing green on the trees day by day in Spring that scarcely any emotion of either joy or sorrow is felt at the leaves' birth and death. Has the yearly change dulled the appreciation of the majority of us, one wonders?—change of leaf from new-born emerald to darker green, from green to gold and red and brown? Here in this country the novelty of leaf-shedding can be enjoyed; for as we all know, the trees of the tropics are practically evergreen, suffering no regular periodical loss of foliage. Amid this scene of pathos is there no joy left, are there no lessons to be learnt? Has not almost every writer found something fresh to say regarding the world in its ruin at ended Autumn? Of this season Landor says: "The damps of Autumn sink into the leaves and prepare them for the necessity of their fall; and thus insensibly are we, as years close around us, detached from our tenacity of life by the gentle pressure of recorded sorrow."

"A little garden brimming over with flowers should mark
the days and weeks and months with bud and blossom,
and the worst injuries of time be fallen leaves."

—DOUGLAS JERROLD.

NOVEMBER

"ST. MARTIN'S Summer" is over, with its welcome aftermath of sun, blue skies and flowers, although this year the delightful Autumnal period, with its Spring-laden breezes, was spared to us for a much longer time than many remember. Yet we may safely, yet sorrowfully, say that it is over; at least, more than half that goes towards it, the golden leaves, the late flowers—these have all but vanished.

All thro' the night the wind holds havoc in the garden,
A short while since to bloom woo'd by wind-kisses light;
Hark to the prelude played ere enter frosts that harden
All thro' the night.

The garden, now a piteous desolation, greets our sight;
Stands the north wind at its dewed gates for chiefest warden,
Beneath a sky of cloud, obscuring starshine bright.

The pearly mists their steadfast gaze keep guard on
Its ways made dull withal by Nature's weakened might;
The last leaves fall to earth laid like to jewels of sard on
All thro' the night.

(A NOVEMBER GARDEN.)

Pitiful is the appearance of every garden, and how complete the ruin! They seem so vastly different from the gardens of April, when drenched with the year's youthful tears they shone silvery green, filled with the promise of what the happy year would bring, that has brought, and but lately passed away. The most prominent item in the November landscape is the ever-prevailing mists that hang around its

leafless hedges and bare and baring trees, above which the clouds and the sun hold combat, the clouds being generally victorious.

In nearly every garden we may now see the smoke arising from the burning weeds; all around the air is filled with their aromatic scent; we may hear the hiss and crackle. It is not unpleasant to watch the opal smoke curl upwards through the mist, and, as one looks, one feels the true charm of Tennyson's lines—

“A golden Autumn woodland reels
Athwart the smoke of burning weeds.”

In a corner of the garden a few blooms of the blue gentian I find, yet everywhere smoulders the flame of the lingering tints. The gold of the leaves is given to earlier Autumntide when they stood out, this year in particular, in the most charming vignettes as the trees stood enveloped in the filmy golden haze, glorifying the most prosaic thing; now, this gold, as it were, is almost consumed, but dross and embers remain on the cold hearth of Autumn's furnace!

These are but a few of November's characteristics. How many more, of greater beauty, are left for each individual to discover! It is the little that we care to know about the things around us that makes them appear so uninteresting to many; it is by caring to know as much as we can about the common things around that they grow in beauty, and it is by learning much, or by discovering some of these beauties, we know how much there is still to be learnt—how innumerable the beauties still to find.

Now gleams on high, when the night is clear, the wonder-

ful light of the Milky Way, that glow of radiancy caused by the condensation of the light of millions of stars closely contiguous to one another. Who has not gazed often at this white celestial pathway, along which the chariot of Phaeton flew? And, looking upon the sighing leafless poplars standing amid their fallen, amber-like leaves, who has not thought of Zeus, who metamorphosed the sisters of Phaeton into poplars, and their tears into amber?

"Let us go forth and taste the fragrant air of the garden."

—EDGAR ALLAN POE.

NOVEMBER

THE last leaves are fast fragrantly falling—

"The last leaves fall, the acorn softly drops ;
All things come round at their appointed time.
The opening primroses, the fragrant lime,
The Summer's rose, the Autumn's golden crops.
The last bird flies athwart the windy wave,
The last rose sheds its leaves in Autumn's lap ;
And stays the flow of leaf life-giving sap.
All things come round, the birthday and the grave.
The last voice dies ; now in the thinned, hushed wood
Are forest kings stripped of their diadems,
Through all the misty hours their branches sigh.
The coral jewels, the birds' bright winter food,
Blush in brown settings on leaf-empty stems ;—
All things come round—Spring shall come by-and-by."

In Nature all things come round in their wonderful order ; thus in its turn Autumn came, and its last hours now linger with us. The almost halcyon time but lately vanished, with its revived Summer memories and sequence of beautiful days—generally the wettest period of the year—proved for once the driest. The November woods are all but empty of leaves ; most of them along frequented paths have been swept away or trodden underfoot, although in coppice, where they remain undisturbed, they still beautify the ground with their patches of blended colour, especially beautiful where the faint sunshine, falling upon them through the leafless branches, dapples them with light : soon must those few that have braved the weather and still flutter in

the breeze be whirled away. From the cones of the alders, which grow by preference along the stream, the seeds are shaken into the water, and are drifting to their various destinations, often germinating in the Spring on the breast of the water, establishing themselves at last in a suitable spot. It has been noticed that the alder is less injurious to vegetation growing beneath it than all other trees; it adds a certain charm to the woodlands, and Gilpin considers it the most beautiful of aquatic trees except the willow. Most of its glossy serrated leaves are still upon its branches, for it is one of the few trees to retain its foliage until very late in the year. Everywhere the world is putting on its Winter appearance; upon paths thickly lie the acorns tipped with yellow, showing where they sat in their elegantly formed cups upon the branches above. In a wayside garden passed to-day, on the empty branches of a young poplar, I noticed a happy gathering of five young starlings, ever and anon uttering a shrill little cry, and beneath them, on a lime, a thrush sat and sang most melodiously: maybe some such words as these was its song to the shivering tree: "The Winter will quickly pass, and Spring come back with gentle potent touch, bidding your emerald leaves unfold, bringing Summer in its train, that shall fill your boughs with blossoms of scented gold!" In this same garden where the starlings were chattering, and the thrush was singing, the flowers were very scanty; the only bright-coloured blossoms were

"Autumn daisies lifting violet eyes,
Tearful through the mists to misty skies."

It is lichen-time, and now that the woodland ways are leafless, and vegetation almost at its lowest ebb, we may trace

these beautiful formations in thicket, on wall, upon twig, in fact everywhere—

“The living stains, which Nature’s hand alone,
Profuse of life, pours forth upon the stone;
For ever growing, where the common eye
Can but the bare and rocky bed descry.”

How aptly has Crabbe named these lichens, “living stains,” for the one common to almost every wall (*Parmelia parietina*) appears as a pale golden-grey stain. Although this season is alluded to as lichen-time, it is not to say that lichen is only to be found at the present time; for indeed all the year round this moss-like fungus is frequent everywhere, and well worth much study. Thriving only where the air is the purest, we may be certain that where fully developed it is a sure sign that the situation is a healthy one. Nothing can be more varied than the appearance of lichens: some are lobed and foliaceous, some hard and crustaceous, some of a leprous substance, drawing their food from the atmosphere. So the lichens grow in beauty as the cold advances, some matching the grey of Winter skies, some making miniature sunsets on the walls with their golden stains. So the last leaves fall, and the year is sinking calmly to rest; the wind drives through, and the mists encircle the November woodlands!

"Walking where the shadows steal, across the garden here,
alone with memory."

—MACKENZIE BELL.

NOVEMBER

O month of sorrow, when a robe the world enfolds
All opal spun, that will not with to-morrow
Lifted be ; O days that now so seldom sun engolds,
O month of sorrow !

Weeps every tree its tears of gathered mist, low
Upon dead leaves they fall ; our sight to-day beholds
A barren land, from which we may not borrow

For days to come one hope, though every tree-bud holds
Its Spring-birth dream through days of Winter's horror.
O land of leafless woods, and flowerless, sunless wolds,
O month of sorrow !

"*VALE* *atque vale* !" In these, the first days of Winter, when almost all that is bright and beautiful in Nature vanishes, this is the lament that escapes in silence from the hearts of many who part with their garden favourites, and have, in exchange for bright clear days, November's gift of fogs. At times there are brief glimpses and fleeting visits of almost summer days, one of the chief characteristics of November ; only a few days since, in the warm sunlight, I noticed a dragon-fly glittering on gauzy wings amid golden foliage, and a butterfly also amid the chrysanthemums. "Some Chrysanthemums and a Rose." This is the title of a charming photo-study from Nature received from a friend ; and what memories and meaning it holds. In the rose, all the gladness and brightness of Summer ; in the chrysanthemums, all the thoughts of Autumn seem expressed, the promises of the year fulfilled, and of Nature tired yet triumphant. But this is the fair side

of the picture. The foliage of the larger trees hangs drearily in the mist-like sheaths and patches on branches that grow, day by day, more leafless and winter-like. Yet we cannot but admire the splendid bits of colour that lie underfoot on sodden paths, more especially to be found in the gigantic leaves of the plane, and those of the glossy Lombardy poplar; neither must the litter of elm leaflets be overlooked. The mist bestows a certain beauty upon many of the garden's fading and faded occupants. A garden that I know, with its path guarded by miniature Irish yews, had these same trees one morn completely swathed as with gossamer; the effect, if ghostly, was pleasing, and would, had the morning been bright and clear, have been lost.

" Apart from everything else . . . a garden is the reward of
toil, the earth's cry of delight . . . the full enjoyment
of plenty and rich colour."

—MRS. EARLE.

DECEMBER

Not a breath of mild air
Blows over the garden,
That sharp frosts harden,
And keen winds keep.

But a flower is there,
A pale ghost of the Summer,
The year's last comer,
To realms of sleep.—

The beauty of the Christmas Rose,
A lustrous pearl that snow-ward blows,

Not a sound ; not a word
The garden is telling,
But a music swelling
Of bells a-chime.

And the breast of a bird
Outbraving the weather,
Its crimson feather
In winter-time

Gleams as a newly-opened rose,
In Winter's garden, white with snows.

**" A flower is come for every flower that went.
In autumn, the sun glows, the south wind blows.
So walking in a garden of delight,
I came upon one sheltered, shadowed nook,
Where broad leaf-shadows veiled the day with night,
And there lay snow unmelted by the sun."**

—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

"Amidst th' Hesperian gardens . . .
Eternal roses grow, and hyacinth,
And fruits of golden rind, on whose faire tree,
The scallie-harnest dragon ever keeps
His unenchanted eye."
—MILTON (*Comus*).

DECEMBER

THERE is one flower to-day in the open, out-braving the coldest weather—the fragile-looking and retiring Winter or Christmas Rose, or Black Hellebore (*Helleborus niger*), which is always worth attention. Many and quaint are the superstitions surrounding it. In times long past it was used to purify houses and to hallow dwellings. The ancients also had a belief that by strewing or perfuming their apartments with this plant they drove away evil spirits. This ceremony was performed with great devotion, and accompanied with the singing of solemn hymns. In the same manner they blessed their cattle with the hellebore to keep it free from the spells of the wicked. It also used to be called the power of St. Agnes, and was held sacred to her. The hellebore, though used in sorcery, was regarded as a *fuga demonum*, and it was also reputed to drive away melancholy. Lyte says that it made the senses of mad people to return to them. Michael Drayton writes of his herbalist as curing melancholy "by sovereign hellebore." In Gerard's time the flower was known as Christ's Herb, Christmas Herb, and Christmas Flower, and in Scotland it is known as Christmas wort. In that charming book, "Days and Hours in a Garden," I find a delightful passage regarding the Christmas Rose: "Almost daily, as I passed, I have peeped in to watch the cluster of white buds nestled snugly within. The buds have duly swelled and lifted one by one their heads, and now, this

morning (December 12th), our first bunch of Christmas Roses has been gathered. This flower must, I think, be dear to every one with a heart for flowers. Its expression is so full of innocence and freshness—for it is not only human persons who have expression in their faces!—and then the charm of its myrtle-like stamens and clear-cut petals—snow cold to the touch—and its pretty way of half hiding among the dark leaves, always ready to be found when sought, and always with so many more blossoms than had been hoped for! To some, indeed, the associations bound up with the Christmas Rose, with every dear sound of its name, may be dearer than all its outward loveliness; recalling, perhaps, the home and garden of their childhood, and happy Christmases of long ago; ‘the old familiar faces,’ and tones of the voices that are gone.”

If few are the flowers, and limited the bird-life of the December garden, it is nevertheless a garden of memories.

"By a garden is meant mystically a place of spiritual repose,
stillness, peace, refreshment, and delight."

—NEWMAN.

DECEMBER

Lighting the garden's gloom, a flow'r-flame's red,
A year's last rose enshrining faint perfume
I see, one Summer-flower 'mid all things dead,
Lighting the garden's gloom.

Yet soon shall pearl-pink Noel-roses bloom
Amid the snow on tired Nature's bed,
Telling a New Year's birth, an old one's doom.

Last rose, thou dost two diverse seasons wed :
Summer with Winter, for upon the tomb
Of the dead year thy petals thou dost shed,
Lighting the garden's gloom.

(A LAST ROSE.)

DECEMBER, the last month of the year, brings its utter
desolation, and everywhere is

"The rich smell of rotting leaves,
And the breath
Of the fading edges of box beneath,
And the year's last rose."

The warm days, but lately left us, have persuaded many a rose-bush to send forth a bud, which will but wither in its infancy; each bud that was to be a flower will never open to the sunlight, nor give to the air its sealed odour. So silent are these present days, even the robin's song is all but ended; its notes first gave us warning of Autumn's coming, for its first sweetest song was sung when the earliest of Autumn leaves were falling, and the last flowers of Summer drooped beneath the sky, grey with the Autumn rain. To-day it hops

about the garden, oftentimes uttering a faint, frail note. From the heart of a near copse, mist-enveloped, there comes ringing the note of the blackbird: and how it cheers one while walking through the mist, the gift of these drear December days. Dearly the blackbird loves the leafless coppice, when, in some less severe day of Winter, the sun is wooed to shine and warm, but faintly, the mist; then it is he there delights to whistle—his notes are but a poor pretence at singing, yet they tell us of the clear, rich songs that he will sing when Spring puts forth new leaf again.

"Perhaps it is the *sympathy* of a garden with every passing mood that endears it to the heart of those who foster a passion for flowers and their environment."

—HELEN MILMAN.

DECEMBER

Rose of the Winter sun, thy song is sweet,
Flower of melody, when singing's done
Thou tell'st in song the year's days are complete,
Rose of the winter sun.

In leaf-dead garth when skies above are dun,
And over all the earth with silent feet
The white mists creep, thy breast to colour won,

Glistens and gleams ; the days are few and fleet
Left this old year, yet thou the glad new one
Soon to be born with sweetest song will greet,
Rose of the winter sun !
(THE ROBIN.)

NOT always is it "drear December." At times days come to us when for a brief space of time the world with light and clearness seems to be the waking world of Spring. Very beautiful the sunlight makes the dead reeds and rushes beside the river, and the tangle of dead stalks threading the almost bare hedgerows. And yet it is a world of ruin, although the magic of the sunlight paints the lingering withered leaves and the lifeless hedgerows' berry-strung creepers with many glowing tints of brown. Now that the massed colours of the tall and stately trees, which but lately by their magnitude arrested our admiration, have all but departed, we are bidden to notice individually the exquisite changes of the hedge-side, the rich red of the pear's leaflets, the blackberry's mottled leaves of vivid and varied hues, the yellows and brown of the crab-apple, and all those many bright leaves

and berries that grace the hedge at this season with gay colour.

To-day, strange to say, the bees are out, but their journey is in vain; for it is a blossomless if a sunlit land. Not a golden flower is on the gorse, which looks sprightly and full of life among the clary that blossomed almost all the Summer and Autumn. There is a warm wind, and as the branches of the laburnum, heavy with seed vessels, are swayed by it, they make a merry musical tinkle. The holly branches are showing red here and there with a wealth of berries, and offer a tempting feast to our home-staying, faithful birds; there is also a giant crop of hips and haws, which in many countries is said to be a token of a hard and long Winter. This is but a piece of folklore, and indeed in rural districts the Winter is foretold in many a strange and curious manner.

"To think what artistic and scientific gardening might become . . . No occupation is healthier; none is fuller of variety and interest."

—MORTIMER COLLINS.

DECEMBER

MID-DECEMBER and the last leaf has fallen, but how many of us are there who notice the pleasures to be found in the leafless woods, while Winter passes with its short days? "The pleasures of the pathless woods" we all acknowledged in the depth of Summer-time, when we trod the moss-carpeted path between the low-hanging branches of the trees. If one could describe the countless delicate pictures of Winter-time: here upon an arch of the leafless hedge, hidden by no leaf, a robin sits and pours forth a melody to the silent land. The wintry meadows and fields are one monotint of grey; tree-trunks are encrusted with silver lichens; and feeding together on the short grass of the face of the fields are snow-white swans, having left the leaf-filled water of the lake, and the black crows, discarding the fallow lands.

If my garden is empty of blossoms, it is not utterly devoid of pleasure, for half the enjoyment of a garden is the constant exercise of the imagination: one is always living three—or, indeed, six—months hence. As we plant our bulbs we can conjure up visions of hyacinths and crocus open to the New Year's light, and in the depths of its desolation picture the treasure of roses that June will bring!

"As art is said to be utterance of beauty, so a garden that is carefully tended, utters perhaps the truest words in praise of and shows beauty in its most perfect form."

—P. FLEMMING.

DECEMBER

IN the bare days of Winter, when a bright day returns to us—in the early days when the leaves have but lately left the trees, the Summer's scent of roses seems to linger in the air, and Autumn's gold is in our eyes—it is like a welcome friend's returning. It is just the same when, on such a day, we find a blossom, glowing in the garden, whose life we thought had ended with warm winds and sunny skies—how much it brings to us of the Summer past. Its open petals are as a book, just as Browning said—

"Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbrite and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace, in my need
From title-page to closing line."

For there is much to be read in the leaves of a flower, and in keeping with this thought of mine this graceful passage on flower associations has Canon Ellacombe in one of his garden-books:—

"There are flowers which tell of pleasant travels, and long walks and pleasant spots; there are others which bring to memory voices which we shall never hear, and faces which we shall never see again in the world; and hundreds more which in their several ways have their own associations and memories, which will make each and all forget-me-nots of the highest value and beauty; and in looking on our flowers and

with these thoughts there is nothing mawkish or sentimental, the thoughts are good and wholesome; and though some of the memories connected with the flowers may be sad, and some of the associations may yet be painful, yet *meminisse juvat!* is written on them all; and yet our flowers can give us such memories, and can be linked with such associations, we may, indeed, be thankful."

"There is no gardening without humility, and an assiduous willingness to learn."

—ALFRED AUSTIN.

DECEMBER

The grey mists creep above the earth and curl
Around the faded stems of Winter's sway.
We sit and watch them mantling all things grey,
Until night doth its banner black unfurl.
One day—how long, how short, it is not ours
To know—but we shall as the grey mists be,
Slip out of life just as mysteriously,
And pass away as die the Summer flowers.
Will it be sweet to die? will it be sad?
Shall we go unaccompanied or in throngs
Into the silent land that no man knows?
Will it be beautiful and good and glad
To live anew, take up unfinished songs,
To gather at the last Life's Fadeless Rose?

THE wild, rough winds are abroad, and we are standing in the land of Winter. Across the sky the heavy clouds are scudding, clouds that are the vanguard of the snow. The genial weather at last is over; Autumn has run the course of its ruin. The thrushes which made our desolate gardens ring with melody for very thankfulness at the seeming return of Summer, have silenced their melodies; this abrupt change from song to silence is a sure sign that the meteorological conditions have changed for the worse. It is, perhaps, half with joy and half with sadness we greet the year as it enters upon the last stage of its journey. We see the dead reeds, and hear them whisper by the desolate mere; the scarlet berries of the cuckoo-pint are rotting beneath the hedges, where above them are entangled the shrivelled cleavers. The

berries, "the coral jewellery of the hedge," are now left to finish ripening under the grey mists, to blush rosier in the cold, wintry rain; some of them will still grace the branches until Spring, when the new leaf-buds bursting will bid them begone, thus linking Winter to Spring with

"Coral clasps and amber studs."

"The world within the garden fence is not the same weary and dusty world with which we outside mortals are conversant; it is a finer, lovelier, more harmonious Nature."

—NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS is once again in our midst, and December draws fast to its close. The golden flame of the sun is for days and days together extinguished, blown out, as it were, by the boisterous winds, or stifled with the mist. At this festive season, these fireside days, Nature is at its very lowest ebb; only the pearl-tinted blooms of the Christmas roses,

"The last pale blossoms of the year,
Coming when holly-berries glow and cheer,"

peep from out their sheltering foliage, or the stars of *Yasmine nudiflorum*, pale and half transparent with rain and mist, bravely blossom against the wall in spite of all inclement weather. The Christmas rose is certainly the one valuable flower for the Winter garden, but it is also very capricious in its growth, having a great aversion to being disturbed, growing very luxuriantly in one place, and in another gradually dwindling away. Many are the myths and superstitions associated with this, as well as all Christmas plants and trees, none of which will we catalogue here. Was it not Carlyle who said: "Superstition, that horrid incubus which dwelt in darkness, shunning the light, with all its racks and poison-chalices and foul sleeping-draughts, is passing away without return."

Sometimes we are blessed at this season with bright for-

tuitous days that are filled with prescient joys of Spring.
But a perfect Winter picture, always so acceptable at this
mirthful time, is when

“Fiercely flies
The blast of north and east, and ice
Makes daggers at the sharpen’d eaves,”

and the garden is covered with snow, the feathery *Arbor vite*—symbol of unchanging friendship—sparkling with snow-jewels; the yew’s sad foliage—emblem of longevity and life eternal—made joyous and pretty with its white burden of snow. Snow: how many of us give a thought to the beauties of it, except it be the children, who, watching from the window, clap their little hands as the feathery flakes fall from the sky? How many of us ever consider the world of beauty contained in a single snowflake, those wonderful six-rayed crystals, like so many clusters of pale Spring anemones whose blossoms are also six-rayed? So Nature in her lowest form, the frail snowflake, hails this happy season by displaying its countless perfect stars.

“The snowflakes flutter down from angel-wings,
The brown bare branches whisper ‘To us cling!’
The snowflake voices say ‘Twill soon be Spring!’
I watch them fall milk-white from pearl-grey skies.
What are they—frozen tears from angels’ eyes?
Or petals from the blooms of Paradise?
And, looking o’er God’s acre, there they lay
Like letters from the Land of Endless Day,
Brief missives from the world of Far-away.
My lattice, ivy-draped to the veiled light
I ope, they flutter in pure, frail, and white,
Their crystals sparkling in the room’s firelight.
White messengers, to what end were you born?
I bend o’er you, at one breath you are gone!”

Though the Christmas days be very dismal, and frost more than ever severe, or be the weather by chance mild, the happy carols of blackbird and thrush break at times the quiet of empty woodlands; and especially may they be heard at the peaceful nightfall hours.

The eve of Christmas closes in; everything outside begins to whiten with the hoar-frost; we hang up the holly and mistletoe in hall and room, and we are thankful that, although so many fanciful customs which characterised the Christmas of our forefathers have passed away, this one of decorating our homes is still preserved. As we twine the evergreens around the pictures of beloved faces, we seem to hear, echoing along the corridor of years, voices of those whose smiles were all the light of the happy time. With overwhelming force the thought for a moment steals to us that this Christmas shall

"Bring no more a welcome guest
To enrich the threshold"

Then, with our tasks done and the midnight hour creeping on, we sit and listen for the bells to tell us the grand old message. And to how many of us who sit in sweet expectation with lives overflowing with joy, do not some notes of sadness fall as we listen to the midnight chimes. And some (for whom the Prince of Peace is indeed born) whose lives are overburdened with sorrow, must confess, as they listen to midnight melodies, to a joy and hope unspeakable born within their hearts, and feel the rays of light steal into their lives from Bethlehem's unextinguishable Star!

"No cloud obscures the violet arch above,
While clear from heights unfathomable, orbs
Shed joys divine which waiting earth absorbs,
Foretelling the glad day of peace and love.

The glad day dawns, Christ's welcome natal day,
And our souls rise from out th' involving gloom,
Within our hearts hope plants her fairest bloom,
Love sings to us her sweetest, holiest lay."

"In a beautiful garden man tempers the hard-and-fast lines of artificial selection by leaving something to natural selection."

—ALFRED AUSTIN.

DECEMBER

THE shortest day is over ; Winter is passing, and Christmas gone with its accompanying festivities. Up to the present we have had but scant signs of the wintry season, or the presence of Christmas in our midst. Of late the days have been filled with almost Maytime sunshine, and Springlike breezes blowing across clear lands lying beneath clear skies. Yet come what will, Christmas, with its sound of bells, its visible cheer, its peaceful message, marks the season of year and the flight of time. The garden, perhaps, has a greener look than its wont at this period, holding many bushes half in doubt whether to burst into leaf or to be wise and wait. Every tree has reached its last stage of nakedness, except those evergreens which form our decorations, for

"The time admits not flowers or leaves
To deck the banquet."

Although every leaf has fallen, each branch is preparing for the Spring. The chestnut's branches are full of little closely bound up knobs of brown, each one bright with a coating of frost-resisting substance ; every twig of the larch is scattered with tiny red jewels that will open when the true Spring days are born. One tree remains unaltered—the yew,—speaking to us its message in Summer sunlight or in Winter gloom :
"I change but in death."

"A garden . . . where we can distract ourselves a moment
with our flowers from the conversation of our books;
nothing of all this is useless for that health of the
soul necessary to the works of the mind."

—ERNEST RENAN.

DECEMBER

BLEAK and bare stretches the December landscape till
lost in the thick, overhanging mist. Nowhere is the
dreariness of the Winter more noticeable than where

"Through a leafless landscape flows a river."

We, many of us, remember this beautiful line of Longfellow's,
and the poem in which it occurs, where our friendships are
so exquisitely likened to a river—the river of memory—
flowing unchanged through our lives like the river flowing
through the Winter land, even though

"Life grows bare and tarnished with decay."

To walk in Nature's ruined temple is not an unpleasant
recreation when the day happens to be bright and frosty.
How truly delightful is the first real frost of the Winter,
which often does not take place until early in the year's last
month, with the white rime flung everywhere, sparkling in the
sunlight. Yet

"How brief the frost—the first ! how fairy-like
Its touch on leaf and flower—jewels lost
When morn-mists clear—gleams sun on pale and spike ;
How brief the frost !

Yet for its frail, brief beauty this the cost—
The trees are robbed to fill the waiting dyke,
The last rose doomed, the Summer's lovely host.

The late leaves float 'bove home of perch and pike,
The berries shimmer 'bove the banks enmossed.—
How ruinous this touch so fairy-like !—
How brief the frost !”

Here in Summer, when the whispering trees, leaf-laden, waved gracefully, and their boughs tossed high in the air, like huge green waves of some sea, the beauty and symmetry of trunk and branches were lost to view; but now, as we walk in the empty woodlands, these become visible, and to the cultivated mind an added beauty to the Winter landscape. In the seeming silence of the Winter sleep, which seems to wrap everything, Nature is still at work, for she is never idle, knowing not *ennui*. Along every path is seen the ruin of Summer and Autumn's beauty, the brown, curled, faded bracken under foot, and overhead the few withered leaves still clinging to the branches of the pollards.

The sparrows keep up a continual chirp among the ivy that swathes the old wall bordering the garden; the blackbird and thrush grow more friendly towards us. How few are the flowers. Upon the branches of the arbutus (the strawberry or austere tree) hang the ripened berries formed by last year's blossoms. A pretty contrast is this to many another evergreen, such as *Araucaria imbricata*, or monkey puzzle, cypress, and *Arbor vitæ*. Neither is any well-cared-for garden complete without its clump of Christmas roses, those ever-welcome pale blossom stars that blush above the snow, redeeming the garden from its look of utter desolation. There is one other flower which is very dear to the December garden, *Jasmine nudiflorum*—naked flowering jasmine; it is one of the most desirable of hardy deciduous climbers, producing a great abundance of flowers, like clusters of golden stars,

throughout the winter months; it seems somewhat regretful that it is not cultivated more largely. Two of the prettiest and long-lasting flowers for indoor decoration is this yellow jasmine and the Christmas rose, their soft tints blending together in perfect harmony. It is astonishing,

“In the days when the cruel frosts harden,
And shatters each thing that is fair,
One bloom, how it brightens the garden;
One bird, how it softens the air!”

For do not the days seem less wintry when these yellow stars peep in at the window, when we espy from our warm room the Christmas roses bravely blossoming outside, or when we listen to the blackbird whistling from the leafless tree?

"A modest garden . . . should contain for those who know
how to look and wait, more instruction than a library."

—AMIEL.

DECEMBER

YET another plant is left in our December garden, and is worth considering for the sake of its evergreen trailing stems. In old gardens, long, long ago, this plant, the periwinkle (*Vinea major*), was a great favourite, so well suited to cover dark ways in situations where few flowers will grow. Now one seldom sees it. It was named by those who loved it of old "The Joy of the Ground." I found in an early MS.: "Parwynke is an erbe greene of colour in time of May beryth blo flour. Ye leaf is thicke . . . as in ye greene ivy leaf . . . men call it ye joy of grounde."

Butter-bur (*Petasites vulgaris*). This is perhaps the only wild flower that is now in bloom, and as I view this leafless spike of lilac blossoms, it calls to mind a dear old garden. How well I remember always watching for its appearance in a deserted part of that garden. Later, in the Spring and Summer, it would unfold its enormous leaves, deemed by everybody as the most pernicious of all weeds! How acceptable are the bright patches of colour the holly furnishes, with its tufts of vermilion and golden berries, and how cheerful is the look of its glossy leaves above favourite pictures in the flicker of the firelight, intermingled with sprigs of the sorrowful cypress and sad yew. And here a strange yet true thought is embodied, applicable to many circumstances in life: we bring these evergreens, that are tokens of sorrow, to add to our Christmas mirth!

It is the last day of the Old Year; the last sad twilight deepens over its aged form. We sit in the glow of the embers and muse upon the many things that have fled for ever, the beauties of the passing seasons which we have beheld, saying with Shakespeare—

“We have eyes to wonder, but lack tongue to praise.”

Anon the bells chime from the tower. In the silence of the year's last hour we gaze from our window over the sweep of the star-strewn frosty sky, where fall, ever and anon, the stars like golden petals from over-blown flowers, and we almost hear the Old Year bidding us farewell in the words of Michael Drayton—

“Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part.

Nay, I have done, you get no more of me;

And I am glad—yea, glad with all my heart—

That thus so cleanly I myself can free.

Shake hands for ever!”

THE END